CODEX
Who We Are

By Carlo Passoni

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DISCLAIMER:

The book has been translated from Italian (original book) into English, despite my efforts to translate and maintain the quality of the concepts, there may be linguistic errors.

Have a nice trip

The following is based on the best of my ability to observe and understand.
If my observational, logical, or intellectual capacities were to improve, the "explanation" might change.

INTRODUCTION

We have little time to waste. We are children of summaries. That's why this book will be short and focused, reduced to the essential concepts.

Reading keys:

- This book offers both an objective and subjective analysis of who we are and how we function on a psychological level. It is enriched with reflections and suggestions on how to face certain dilemmas.

- My intention is not to seek approval for the ideas presented, but to invite genuine reflection, free from the masks we wear every day to survive in this society.

- Regardless of the outcome, whether you agree or not, you will finish this book having taken an extraordinary journey of introspective self-analysis that will deepen your sense of self.

- The examples, stories, and analyses are not meant to proclaim absolute truths, but simply to question them.

- Coherence does not exist here. Coherence itself is, paradoxically, the child of hypocrisy. Because sometimes, in order to remain aligned with your previously expressed thoughts, you are forced to suppress doubt, becoming incoherent with yourself and betraying your own freedom of expression.

The key questions this book seeks to answer are*: Who are We? Where do our thoughts come from, and who controls them? What gives rise to our feelings and emotions? Where does our sense of identity, personality, and Ego originate? What lies beneath depression and anxiety? Is there a pattern that binds us all?*

We'll begin with a more academic approach, but it's essential to understand the basic rules of human nature. Don't be put off by the initial theory. Once certain concepts are clear, the journey becomes truly engaging.

CHAPTER II
BRAIN

The brain, located within the skull, is the central organ of the human nervous system and plays a crucial role in regulating and coordinating almost all bodily functions, including movement, perception, thought, and emotion. This extraordinary organ is composed of several regions, each with specific tasks. The cerebellum, for example, is essential for coordinating movement and maintaining balance, while the brainstem supports automatic vital functions such as breathing and heart rate, acting as a bridge between the brain and the spinal cord.

The largest and perhaps most fascinating part of the brain consists of the cerebral hemispheres, which house the cerebral cortex, an outer layer densely packed with neurons.

This region is divided into four main lobes:

- the frontal lobe, associated with reasoning and planning;
- the parietal lobe, which processes sensory information;
- the occipital lobe, primarily responsible for vision;
- and the temporal lobe, important for hearing, memory, and certain emotional and language functions.

Communication between the hemispheres is made possible by the corpus callosum, a structure that facilitates the exchange of information through a vast network of nerve fibers.

A fundamental aspect of the brain is its plasticity, the ability to adapt and change in response to learning and experience. This feature allows for the formation of new neural connections and the strengthening of existing ones, which are essential for learning and memory. Brain plasticity demonstrates the brain's ongoing ability to evolve and reshape itself, highlighting its remarkable capacity to respond to challenges and opportunities in the environment. The brain operates through the processing of electrical and chemical signals between neurons.
Neurons act like meticulous couriers within the brain and body, responsible for delivering essential messages that keep us functioning.

When one neuron needs to transmit information to another, it cannot simply hand it over directly. Instead, it uses an encrypted language made of electrical signals and chemical substances. This happens in special places called synapses, which work like tiny mailboxes between one neuron and the next. There, the message is converted into chemicals called neurotransmitters, which travel across a very small gap to reach the neighboring neuron.

Once they arrive, they attach to special parts called receptors.

It's a bit like inserting a key into a lock and turning it. If the key fits, the door opens.
If neurotransmitters fit properly into the receptors, they can trigger the receiving neuron to activate a new electrical signal and pass it along, as if saying go.
It's like telling the door to open and letting the message continue its journey.

For example, when we learn something new, the go-type neurotransmitters help strengthen the connections between neurons, making the information easier to access in the future. In dangerous situations, these go-signals speed up the heartbeat and increase blood flow to the muscles, preparing the body for the fight-or-flight response. It's as if the brain presses the gas pedal of a car to escape a threat.

But sometimes, neurotransmitters tell the receiving neuron not to pass the message, as if saying stop. It's like the key doesn't turn in the lock, and the door stays shut. This can happen because the neurotransmitters don't fit that particular receptor, or because other signals are telling the neuron not to activate. This stopping mechanism plays an important role in many situations. For example, in pain control, the brain can reduce pain signals either through its own natural processes or in response to pain-relieving medication.

In coordinating movement, the brain must send stop messages to certain muscles to prevent unwanted or contradictory actions. Many disorders stem precisely from a malfunction in this mechanism. Here are some common examples:

- Anxiety: In people with anxiety disorders, the neurotransmitters that are supposed to calm the brain may not be effective, leading to excessive or inappropriate go-signals that trigger anxious states.
  (This explains the effect of benzodiazepines, which calm us by promoting the stop-signals);

- In depression, it's as if the brain's chemical messaging system, which usually helps us feel well, stops functioning properly. Instead of a steady flow of signals that bring happiness and motivation, the system breaks down. It's not that positive messages are being blocked, but rather that too few are being sent, or the brain struggles to receive them correctly;

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): is linked to dysfunctions in the neurotransmitters that regulate attention and impulse control. This can lead to difficulty maintaining focus and to hyperactive behavior;

- Epilepsy: involves abnormal electrical discharges in the brain that can cause seizures. This phenomenon may result from an excess of go-signals or a lack of stop-signals, leading to excessive and uncontrolled electrical activity;

- Parkinson's Disease: this condition is caused by the death of brain cells that produce dopamine, a neurotransmitter crucial for movement control. The reduction in dopamine leads to an excess of stop-signals in the pathways that regulate movement, resulting in symptoms such as tremors and stiffness;

The decision of neurotransmitters to signal go or stop depends on a multitude of factors, including our emotional states, the surrounding environment, and our physiological needs. This sophisticated system allows the brain to adapt quickly and flexibly to different situations, ensuring that we can respond appropriately to daily challenges, learn from our experiences, and maintain a sense of balance and well-being.

But then, who are we? Where is the line between my sense of self and the chemical parameters that seem to give rise to everything?
Who is really in control?

The debate over who is truly in control—the brain's chemical and electrical activity or our conscious self, including questions of free will and awareness—can be effectively compared to the classic question of which comes first, the chicken or the egg. In the case of the chicken and the egg, one could argue that you cannot have a chicken without the egg it hatches from, yet at the same time, the egg must have been laid by a chicken. This cycle of cause and effect creates a paradox about the origin of the sequence. When we apply this to the question of consciousness and brain activity, the paradox becomes this: are our thoughts, decisions, and sense of free will the direct result of the brain's chemical and electrical processes (the egg), or is that brain activity shaped and guided by our conscious mind and sense of self (the chicken)? And more broadly, is our consciousness and personal identity the product of physical processes, or do we have the ability to shape and direct those very processes ourselves?

Research on the mind and brain suggests a dynamic integration between brain activity and conscious experience. In this sense, the question is not so much about which one comes first, but rather how they interact and influence each other in a continuous cycle of feedback.

The dynamic integration between mind and brain means that every thought, perception, or conscious sensation is tied to specific patterns of neural activity.

At the same time, the way we focus attention, interpret experiences, and make choices can physically alter these neural networks. For example, learning a new skill or repeated exposure to certain stimuli can lead to the formation of new synaptic connections. The idea of a feedback cycle between mind and brain suggests that brain activity not only gives rise to consciousness, but that consciousness can also influence brain activity in return. This feedback loop becomes clear in how mental practices can produce measurable changes in the brain, such as increased gray matter density in areas related to memory, attention, and self-regulation.

Here are some examples:

- Learning and memory: as mentioned earlier, when we learn something new, the brain adapts by creating new connections between neurons, a phenomenon known as synaptic plasticity. This process is driven by experience. Repetition and practice can strengthen these connections, making the information more easily accessible and improving our ability to perform a task. In this case, the conscious experience of learning — thinking, practicing, repeating — directly influences brain activity and structure.

- Emotions and emotional regulation: our ability to recognize and manage emotions affects how we process emotionally significant experiences. For example, consciously facing stressful situations with a positive mindset can not only help us cope better in the moment but can also change how the brain responds to similar situations in the future, potentially reducing the activation of brain areas associated with stress.

- Decisions and behavior: every decision we make is the result of complex brain processes, but at the same time, the decisions we make and how we reflect on them can alter future decision-making processes. For example, learning from a mistake and consciously reflecting on it can modify the neural pathways involved in making similar decisions in the future, potentially leading to better choices.

The Origin of Thought

Thought emerged as a biological strategy to anticipate consequences, adapt to the environment, and increase the chances of survival. The need arose to quickly evaluate situations: threat or opportunity? Approach or flee? How to get that fruit? How to avoid that predator?

The brain, still without language, began to process abstract patterns. If this shape moves in that way, I run. If that smell returns, I eat. Our ancestors started simulating the world in their minds before taking action.

Social learning was born: the ability to observe others and extract models from their behavior. From there, we began to think about what others might be thinking. Thought was no longer just a tool for survival, but a way to create meaning.
Language developed as a collective necessity to represent and share thoughts, allowing us to survive more effectively.

Thought is the expression of our intelligence. Its quality and effectiveness depend on the depth of our experiences, the clarity with which we observe and absorb information, and the mental structure we have built to interpret it.
The more we know how to think, the more intentionally we are able to live.

Intelligence

Intelligence can be defined as the ability to learn from experience, adapt to new situations, understand and manage concepts, and apply knowledge to interact with and shape the environment. In practical terms, it is the set of cognitive functions that allow us to face and solve problems, make predictions, create innovations, and act in the most effective way possible.

Now, the theory of multiple intelligences teaches us that there are actually different forms of intelligence: logical-mathematical, verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, emotional, and so on.

However, in my view, this theory is misleading because all forms of intelligence seem to rely on the same underlying cognitive process.
Whether it's solving an equation, interpreting a facial expression, writing a speech, or improvising a melody, the core mechanism always seems to be this:

1. **Data gathering** (learning, information, sensory input, experiences, stimuli)
2. **Information analysis** (understanding, classification, decoding, contextualization)
3. **Pattern recognition** (structures, rules, correlations, consistencies)
4. **Active reshaping** (adaptation, response, decision-making, creation, expression, action)

In other words, what changes is the **type of data, the context, and the tools used**, but the mental structure that processes them remains similar.
And let's not forget that W. A. Mozart's father was Leopold Mozart, a highly skilled musician and a very strict teacher. Genius never arises out of nowhere. There is always some stimulus or favorable circumstance that triggers the right process.

Alas, perhaps society prefers the magical fairytale just to avoid falling into despair — and that's fine. A world full of Mozarts wouldn't work. There must always be balance in the food chain. By this, I mean that the way our society is structured reflects a hidden order in the distribution of social roles. This order ensures a coordinated and functional system designed to meet the needs of our coexistence.

Mind

The mind refers to the set of cognitive and emotional abilities of an individual, including the functions of thinking, perceiving, remembering, and feeling emotions. It is the place where intelligence and thought reside, along with sensory experiences and emotions. A simple example: think about what you choose to eat for dinner. The process of evaluating options, remembering what you have in the fridge, and feeling the desire for one dish over another happens in your mind.

Consciousness

Consciousness is the ability to be aware of oneself and the surrounding environment. It refers to our subjective experience, to the act of feeling things.

A simple example: when you pinch your arm, you not only feel the pain (a function of the mind), but you are also aware that you are feeling it and that you are the one experiencing that sensation. That awareness is your consciousness.

Mind vs Consciousness: the mind can be seen as the container of all our cognitive abilities, while consciousness is the light that illuminates certain parts of that container, allowing us to become aware of those abilities and their manifestations. The mind includes both conscious and unconscious processes, but it is through consciousness that we become aware of them.

Conscious and Unconscious

The mind is not a separate entity from the body. It is a collection of processes, some accessible to our awareness (conscious), others that operate automatically and beyond our direct control (subconscious). Both are part of the same integrated system. The conscious is the part of our mental activity we are aware of. It is where rational thinking, language, voluntary attention, and planning take place. It is what we use when we reflect on a problem, deliberately recall something, or notice an emotional state.

The subconscious, on the other hand, includes everything that guides our behavior without needing conscious awareness. It influences basic automatic mechanisms such as heart rate regulation, breathing, posture, balance, responses to threatening stimuli, as well as emotions, intuitions, learned behavioral patterns, instinctive reactions, perceptual processes, and motivation. These are not two distinct "levels," but two different ways in which the brain and body process information. One is slow and conscious, the other is fast and implicit. Many of our decisions, actions, and even thoughts are prepared or influenced by the subconscious before we are even aware of them.

Even when we believe we are being rational, the body is already involved. Muscle tone, breathing, hormone chemistry, and emotional memory act as constant filters. And often, the conscious mind comes afterward, to justify what the subconscious has already set in motion.
Heart rate, breathing, and other vital functions are not directly controlled by the subconscious, but by the autonomic nervous system. However, the subconscious can influence them. For example: an unconscious thought or fear triggers anxiety -> the brain interprets the signal as a threat -> the autonomic nervous system activates -> heart rate increases -> breathing accelerates, and so on.

So even if you can't directly control these functions through willpower, your mental state affects them in a tangible way. But what does all this mean? It means that the more aware you are of yourself and of how and why you function, the freer you become.
Free from automatic patterns that guide you without your awareness.
Free from impulsive reactions that do not represent who you are.
Free from anxieties you don't understand, from fears that no longer belong to you, from habits that harm you.
The more you understand your internal mechanisms, the more you can choose when to follow them and when to stop them.
Awareness doesn’t make you perfect, but it gives you room to move.
And that space is freedom.

Interactions between Ego, Conscious, and Subconscious

The subconscious feeds the ego and the conscious mind with motivations, desires, and memories that influence our behavior and decisions, even if we are not directly aware of them. The ego filters and interprets these subconscious influences, comparing them with external reality and social norms in order to make conscious and adaptive decisions. It helps negotiate between internal needs and external constraints, trying to maintain a sense of stability and well-being.

Based on the ego's processing, we act consciously in the world, expressing our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in ways that reflect both subconscious influences and conscious evaluations. In short, the ego operates between the conscious and the subconscious and plays a crucial role in helping us function effectively and adaptively. It integrates deep and often unconscious influences from the subconscious with the immediate and tangible reality of the conscious mind.

And yes, as you may have guessed, many psychological problems arise from this very triangulation. The possible combinations are countless, but imagine a subconscious filled with distorted beliefs that pushes the ego to act accordingly. The ego, trying to adapt, acts on that basis but then collides with a reality that doesn't confirm those beliefs. This leads to a sense of frustration and melancholy that surfaces at the conscious level.

But we'll examine the ego separately in a moment, because it is the key piece on which our entire functioning depends.

Consciousness vs identity: Consciousness is immediate. It concerns the experience of the present moment and the awareness of oneself and the environment. It is transitory and can shift from one moment to the next. Identity, on the other hand, is built over time and represents a more stable and lasting set of traits, beliefs, and affiliations that define who we are as individuals. In short, while consciousness leads us to ask "What am I experiencing right now?" or "How do I feel in this moment?", identity makes us ask "Who am I?" or "What makes me the person I am?"
Both are essential to our experience of life, but they operate on different levels of our existence.

Personality: Personality can be seen as the outward expression or manifestation of identity; how we are, such as being extroverted, introverted, reflective, impulsive, and so on.

Personality vs Character: Imagine two people who are both extroverted (personality), meaning they tend to be sociable, energetic, and enjoy interacting with others. However, one might stand out for their exceptional honesty and commitment to keeping promises (character), while the other might not place the same importance on those values.
So even though they share a similar personality trait, their characters may lead them to behave very differently in situations that require moral integrity.
We can therefore define character as the set of traits that guides the moral and values dimension of our personality.

What are emotions? Where do they come from? How do they influence us, and why do they exist?

Emotions

Emotions are psychophysical responses to external or internal stimuli, marked by specific internal sensations (such as joy, sadness), physical changes in the body (like accelerated heartbeat), and expressive behaviors (facial expressions, gestures, and so on). They are essential for our survival, shaping decisions, relationships, and overall well-being.

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Basic formula:
Emotion = Stimulus + Perception + Rapid
evaluation → Activation → Reaction


Sample  code:
positive stimulus
+ subjective perception of pleasure and/or
satisfaction
→ emotion: joy
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Primary emotions are the foundation of human experience. They are universal, crossing all cultural boundaries, with facial expressions that communicate joy, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust.

These emotions are immediate, triggered by a direct connection with our environment, and they serve a vital function by guiding us in our daily struggle for survival and well-being.

Beyond these basic emotions lies a richer, more complex layer: **secondary emotions.**
These arise from the interaction between primary emotions and our inner world of thoughts and values, shaped by culture and personal experience.

Here are some insights about primary emotions →

Joy

Joy is a positive response that signals when something is going well. It serves to reinforce helpful behaviors. If something makes us feel good, we tend to do it again.

It plays an important social role. It connects us with others, builds relationships, and increases cooperation.

From an evolutionary perspective, joy helped motivate exploration, play, learning, and group bonding. Feeling joy when sharing food or working together with other group members increased cohesion and improved the chances of survival in hostile environments. It is also easily contagious due to the action of mirror neurons.

(And speaking of those — have you ever felt something just by looking at a dog making one of those joyful or silly faces? That's your mirror neurons reflecting their joy. They really are healthy and wonderful life companions.)

Sadness

Sadness pushes us to pause, reflect, and reorganize after a loss or disappointment. It reduces activity and helps conserve energy. It also has a social function — it signals to others that we are in need of support. From an evolutionary perspective, it helps process negative experiences and adapt better in the future.
In early human groups, sadness also served to attract care and protection during moments of vulnerability, increasing the likelihood of surviving difficult events without being left alone.

Anger

Anger arises when we perceive a threat, an obstacle, or an injustice. It helps us defend our boundaries, react, and correct what feels wrong.
It drives us to act. It is tied to self-assertion and conflict resolution. In evolutionary terms, it played a role in maintaining one's position within the group and in defending resources or relationships. Visibly expressing anger, for example, could discourage aggressive behavior from other group members and help maintain social order without the need for physical confrontation.

Fear

Fear is an immediate response to danger. It prepares us to react — to flee, fight, or freeze. It is essential for survival. Those who recognize threats in time have a greater chance of staying alive. Fear is one of the oldest emotions, present even in animals. A sudden noise in the dark or the movement of a predator in the bushes triggers fear and allows for a rapid response, even before there's time to think. This readiness has saved lives for thousands of years.

Surprise

Surprise stops us for a moment and forces us to pay attention to something unexpected. It helps us update our understanding of reality and adapt in real time. It is a neutral reaction that can turn into joy, fear, anger, or something else depending on the context. It serves to help us learn quickly when something breaks our expectations.

In a natural environment, quickly noticing an unexpected change — like sudden silence in the forest or the appearance of something unfamiliar — could mean the difference between ignoring a threat and surviving.

Disgust
Disgust pushes us to avoid things that could harm us, especially on a physical level — spoiled food, strong odors, filth. Over time, it has also extended to behaviors or situations seen as "dirty" from a social or moral perspective. It serves a protective function, related to health, sexuality, and group life. From an evolutionary standpoint, it helped reduce the risk of contamination and disease. Rejecting rotten food or avoiding contact with infected individuals increased the chances of staying healthy and supported the survival of the group.

Now we'll look at some secondary emotions →

Shame
Shame arises when we feel we've done something that violates social expectations or our own standards. It drives us to hide, avoid judgment, and limit ourselves in order not to be excluded. It differs from guilt — in shame, the focus is on how others see us. From an evolutionary perspective, its function is to prevent exclusion from the group. In early social environments, being viewed negatively could mean isolation or loss of access to vital resources.
Feeling shame helped correct behavior and restore acceptance within the group.

Guilt

Guilt arises when we feel we have harmed someone or failed to uphold a personal or moral principle. It drives us to make amends, to apologize, and to avoid repeating the mistake. Unlike shame, the focus here is on the harm caused, not on how others perceive us. Guilt helps strengthen social bonds and personal responsibility. In cooperative groups, acknowledging a mistake and trying to repair it increased mutual trust and internal stability.

Pride

Pride is a sense of satisfaction we experience when we recognize our own success or worth. It gives us strength, motivates us to improve, and encourages us to stay aligned with our goals. It can be constructive, as in healthy self-esteem, or destructive, as in arrogance. From an evolutionary perspective, pride is tied to reputation. Displaying pride in one's achievements could raise status within the group, attract allies, and improve access to resources and potential partners.

Jealousy

Jealousy arises when we perceive a threat to a relationship or a position we consider ours. It is not only linked to love — it can involve attention, status, or privileges. It puts us on alert and can push us to act in order to protect what we see as important. From an evolutionary standpoint, jealousy relates to the protection of resources and exclusive bonds, for example within a couple or a family group, ensuring more secure investments of time, energy, and reproduction.

Embarrassment

Embarrassment is a light but immediate reaction to a situation where we feel exposed, out of place, or judged.
It makes us lower our gaze, laugh nervously, blush.
It is a social signal that communicates, "I know I made a mistake, it wasn't intentional." It is useful because it defuses minor conflicts, showing others that we are not a threat.
In small human groups, this emotion helped maintain harmony and forgiveness when minor mistakes occurred.

Gratitude

Gratitude arises when we recognize that someone has done something beneficial for us without obligation. It is an emotion that prompts us to remember it and, often, to return the favor. It is not just politeness — it is a way to build lasting bonds and mutual trust. From an evolutionary perspective, it helps strengthen reciprocal relationships. If people who help are later helped in return, everyone has more reason to cooperate. Gratitude keeps this mechanism alive.

Feelings

Emotions and feelings are often used as synonyms, but in reality they refer to two different, though connected, processes. Emotions are quick and automatic reactions that are triggered when we perceive something as relevant to our survival, needs, or goals. They have a biological basis, last briefly, and involve the body as well. Heart rate increases, facial expressions change, muscle tone shifts.

They are instinctive, often unconscious responses that prepare us for action. Primary emotions such as fear, anger, joy, disgust, surprise, and sadness are universal and shared even by many animal species.

Feelings, on the other hand, are slower, more stable, and conscious. They are not immediate responses, but mental elaborations that emerge from emotions, experiences, thoughts, or memories. They are not meant to trigger instant reactions, but rather to build meaning over time.

They are connected to how we interpret what we live through, and they deeply influence identity, values, relationships, and decisions. Hope, nostalgia, love, hatred, or resentment, for example, do not flare up suddenly. They develop and persist, even when the body is at rest.

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Basic formula:
Feeling = Emotion + Reflection + Memory + Personal
evaluation
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Sample  code:
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- Event: recalling happy moments from the past
- Primary emotion: joy, sadness
- Interpretation: "I can't relive that time anymore"
- → Feeling: nostalgia

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a feeling that arises from the emotional memory of a past perceived as meaningful or better. It is not just memory, but an affectionate pull toward something that is no longer there — a period of life, a person, a place, a state of mind.
It is a mix of longing and sweetness, often idealized.
It tends to appear during moments of change, loneliness, or uncertainty, when the past takes on the role of emotional refuge.
Unlike sadness, nostalgia can also bring comfort, strengthen personal identity, and foster a sense of continuity.
From an evolutionary perspective, it helps preserve coherence and a sense of self.

Recalling happy moments can reduce stress, increase resilience, and motivate us to restore connection and meaning in the present.

Envy

Envy arises from comparison. We see someone achieving something we wish we had. It can either block us or push us to improve.

It becomes dangerous when it leads to wanting the other person to fail or creates a state of extreme craving. It is a complex feeling, tied to self-esteem and the sense of injustice. In an evolutionary context, envy served to observe what others had and compare it to one's own situation. Noticing that someone received more resources, attention, or recognition triggered a reaction. It could lead to competing for more or improving oneself to avoid falling behind. In this way, envy helped regulate group dynamics and discouraged passive acceptance of imbalance.

Hope

Hope is a future-oriented feeling that arises from the belief that a situation can improve or that a goal can be achieved, even when current conditions are unfavorable. It is not blind optimism but a mental and emotional drive that combines desire, expectation, and possibility. Unlike an immediate emotion, hope requires time, imagination, and a certain level of trust, both in one's abilities and in the external world. It often appears in moments of uncertainty, loss, or struggle, when a reason is needed to keep investing energy. From an evolutionary perspective, its function is clear. Hope helps prevent giving up. It is a tool of mental endurance, useful in moments when danger or loss feels unbearable.

It helps keep the engine running even when fuel is running low. And biologically speaking, that can make the difference between surviving or not.

Hatred

Hatred is an intense and prolonged feeling of aversion. Unlike anger, which is often reactive and temporary, hatred develops over time, fueled by deep-rooted beliefs and a rigid view of the other as a threat or enemy. It is not just an emotion. It is a stable mental attitude that also involves thoughts, moral judgments, and emotional distancing. When we hate, we tend to dehumanize the target.

We no longer see them as a complex person but as a negative symbol, an obstacle, or an evil to be rejected.

This feeling can be directed at individuals, groups, or entire categories, and it tends to grow stronger over time if it is not processed.

Hatred can provide an illusory sense of control and identity. Feeling in opposition to something or someone creates internal cohesion, a sort of us versus them. But this cohesion is fragile and often self-destructive, because it is based on fear, judgment, and exclusion.

From an evolutionary perspective, hatred served to strengthen bonds within the group and increase vigilance toward the outside. Hatred creates the illusion of strength. In primitive contexts, hating the enemy could help trigger collective action and protect group survival.

But in today's complex and interconnected world, hatred becomes nothing more than an obstacle to our evolution and coexistence as a species.

Love

From an evolutionary perspective, love can be seen as a mechanism that promotes bonding between individuals, supporting cooperation, reproduction, and the care of offspring. This bond not only increases the chances of survival for the next generation but also strengthens social cohesion within groups. Biologically, love activates specific neural systems that release neurotransmitters and hormones such as dopamine, oxytocin, and vasopressin. These are associated with pleasure, attachment, and loyalty, and they deeply influence our feelings and behaviors.

Psychologically, love challenges the ego in unique ways, pushing it toward altruism, self-sacrifice, and the expansion of identity to include the other. The experience of love can lead the ego to renegotiate its boundaries, often reshaping priorities and personal values in favor of the partner's well-being or the relationship itself. Greek philosophers explored how love takes different forms — eros, agape, philia, storge — and how each one affects both personal and interpersonal growth.

- **Eros:** represents passionate love, characterized by intense and often sexual desire.

- **Agape** is altruistic, unconditional, and selfless love. It is the kind of love that gives without expecting anything in return, often associated with universal or divine love. Agape expresses itself through acts of kindness, compassion, and understanding toward others, regardless of personal connection. This form of love transcends personal boundaries and extends to all living beings, reflecting a deep desire for universal well-being.

- **Philia** refers to brotherly or friendly love, based on deep friendship and companionship. It is the kind of love shared between friends who have strong bonds and share common interests, values, or experiences. It involves mutual respect, equality, and selfless connection, offering support and understanding. This form of love is essential for psychological well-being, as it provides emotional support, encouragement, and trust.

- **Storge** represents familial or affectionate love, typically found between parents and children, siblings, or extended family members. It is characterized by deep affection, patience, acceptance, and a sense of belonging. Storge is rooted in natural bonds and a sense of duty and responsibility toward loved ones. This form of love emphasizes safety, comfort, and mutual care, and it is fundamental for developing emotional stability and a sense of security.

Attachment theory provides a framework for understanding how early relationships with caregivers — those who provide affection, such as a mother, father, partner, and so on — shape our relational patterns later in life. These attachment styles (secure, anxious, avoidant) influence how the ego relates to love, shaping our expectations, our ways of communicating, and our emotional responses within close relationships.
Love, then, becomes a space where the ego often tries to repair or repeat past dynamics, frequently without conscious awareness.

- **Secure Attachment:** individuals with this style tend to experience relationships grounded in trust, balance, and positivity. In this context, the ego feels valued and safe, allowing open communication and the expression of needs without fear of rejection or abandonment.
  (This style originates from childhood relationships marked by warmth, consistency, and sensitive responses to the child's needs. These children learn that the world is safe and that attachment figures are reliable, leading to adult relationships built on trust, reciprocity, and emotional openness.)

- **Anxious Attachment:** this style is marked by constant worry about rejection and abandonment, often leading to clingy or overly demanding behavior. Here, the ego is fragile, struggling with self-esteem and heavily reliant on external reassurance to feel loved and secure.
  (It develops in children who experience inconsistent caregiving. This uncertainty causes individuals to constantly seek confirmation and reassurance in romantic relationships, fearing abandonment and rejection.)

- **Avoidant Attachment:** individuals with an avoidant style tend to maintain emotional distance in relationships, protecting the ego through independence and self-sufficiency. Often, this stems from a fear of vulnerability, seen as a threat to one's sense of self.
  (This pattern originates from early experiences with emotionally distant or rejecting caregivers. As a result, individuals develop a strong sense of autonomy and avoid emotional closeness or dependence in romantic relationships.)

But I've mentioned the Ego too many times without really explaining it. So now, finally, let's discover what it is.

CHAPTER III
EGO

Identity refers to the perception an individual has of themselves, including gender, personality traits, social roles, and membership in groups such as family, nationality, ethnicity, and culture. The ego is the core of an individual's personal identity, the sense of "I" that arises from self-awareness and subjective experience. This concept of ego encompasses the totality of thoughts, emotions, memories, and perceptions that form a person's conscious experience, functioning as the organizing center of the self. Its primary and original purpose is to ensure our survival. It is what worries about us and takes care of us. It is through the ego that an individual perceives, interprets, and interacts with the surrounding reality, using self-awareness to navigate social relationships, tasks, and the challenges of everyday life.
The ego is therefore a dynamic construct that adapts and evolves in response to external experiences and internal changes.
To me, we — in our entirety — are Ego.
I do not believe in a mind divided into rigid compartments as proposed by Freud, with Id, Ego, and Superego acting as separate entities in conflict with one another.

Ego is everything we are. It is the way we feel, interpret, and respond to reality. It is the active and dynamic filter through which drives, emotions, thoughts, rules, and memories pass.
It is the entity that feels, decides, and changes.
It is your narrative, your inner dialogue, your uniqueness.

Ego is that irreplicable magic.
To me, Ego is our true essence, what is often mistakenly called "Spirit" or "Soul."
Ego is the element that transcends chemistry.

It is formed in the early years of life, shaped by interactions with the environment and especially with attachment figures. A child is not born with a defined sense of self. It is built gradually based on what is reflected by others.

At first, this process is based on very simple equations. If the child is welcomed, understood, validated → "I matter, I exist."
If the child is ignored, mocked, punished → "There is something wrong with me."
In the early years, the ego takes shape through these direct associations.

The problem arises when the child is not helped to distinguish between action and identity. If they make a mistake and receive a harsh or demeaning reaction, they internalize the belief "I am wrong" rather than "I made a mistake." Over time, these equations become more complex. They are enriched by variables, conditions, exceptions, and new experiences. But this only happens if the environment allows the child to review, recalibrate, and rewrite those initial equations. In a healthy individual, the ego remains in constant transformation. It updates, adapts, and evolves through dynamic interaction with the world.

When that updating process gets blocked — due to trauma, rigid environments, lack of awareness, or resistance to change — the ego remains stuck in old equations, built on childish logic. And those logics become permanent filters.

> "If I'm not praised → I'm worthless."
> "If they criticize me → they're attacking me."
> "If I make a mistake → I'm a failure."
> "If I don't control everything → I'll lose everything."

A blocked ego keeps reading the present through the lens of the past. It reacts instead of reflecting. It defends identity rather than evolving it. The key, then, is to turn the ego into an open system — something that can update itself when it receives new information. Only then can it become a useful tool, rather than a cage.

Egoism vs Altruism

Evolutionary psychology offers an enlightening perspective on this topic, suggesting that altruism may have its roots in egoism at both the biological and social levels. In terms of survival, helping others within one's group could increase the chances of collective survival and, as a result, individual survival as well. In this light, an altruistic act, while seemingly selfless, can be interpreted as an evolutionary strategy to improve personal well-being through the success of the group (We really are cunning creatures).

Altruism might be nothing more than disguised egoism — an "egoism 2.0" in which personal fulfillment and satisfaction arise from contributing to others' well-being.

This perspective acknowledges that altruistic acts can generate psychological benefits for the giver, such as a sense of belonging, happiness, and improved self-esteem. In this way, ego and altruism are no longer opposites but become complementary expressions of the self.
And let's be clear. If an action brings real benefit to others and harms no one, that's good enough. There's no need to constantly put intentions on trial. If an altruistic gesture also stems from the desire to feel better or to gratify one's ego, it doesn't really matter, as long as the outcome is a genuine benefit for someone. In fact, maybe we should stop demonizing this dynamic and start using it wisely. If the ego can motivate people to do good, then we might as well use it better — for everyone's advantage.

And now we reach the heart of it all. Because if everyone has an Ego, there is no Ego without Narcissism — and no, narcissism is absolutely not what you think you know it is.

NARCISSISM

There is far too much misunderstanding around narcissism, so let's start from the basics. Narcissism is an expressive trait of the ego, present in every individual in varying degrees and forms.

To make this easier to understand, for now think in terms of two categories: *life narcissism* (the healthy component that we all possess) and *pathological narcissism* (found only in certain individuals, commonly referred to as narcissists). These are two completely different forms, often confused and unjustly blended together. I will refer to the common and healthy aspect of narcissism using the terms *life narcissism* or *natural narcissism*. The rest carries a negative connotation.

Natural narcissism is an evolutionary psychological adaptation that allowed us to believe in ourselves, assert our worth, withstand the world's pressure, and earn a place in the group.

Life narcissism is the expression of the ego that drives a human being to feel worthy, important, and deserving of attention. It is a healthy and strong projection of the self. It's what leads you to believe in yourself, to seek recognition, to demand respect, and to protect your dignity.

When balanced, narcissism does not overshadow others, but coexists with empathy, self-criticism, and awareness of one's limits.
It is the healthy kind of narcissism that makes you lift your head high, without letting it get to your head.
But this does not mean being a narcissist, because those who are truly narcissistic are defined by the intensity and exaggeration of unhealthy traits.
So now pay very close attention to what I'm about to say, because what follows concerns what I believe to be the most widespread and toxic flaw in human nature: Pathological Narcissism.

Let's clarify something immediately. There is a distinction between people who show traits of pathological narcissism and those who meet the clinical criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Think of it like a thermometer. As narcissistic traits increase in intensity, rigidity, and impact on daily life, one can cross a threshold beyond which the condition becomes clinical.
Below that threshold, it is still possible to live with dysfunctional narcissistic traits without developing a full-blown disorder.

In what follows, we will speak of pathological narcissism in the broader sense of the term, keeping in mind that NPD is its most severe and structured form.

Narcissism begins to turn pathological and harmful to one's mental health when it is built on very rigid and distorted patterns of thinking, characterized by excessive self-admiration and preoccupation, little regard for others (often seen as inferior), a constant need to feel special, and a grandiose self-image with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, and beauty.

Relationships are marked by a dynamic of exploitation, where others are valued based on their usefulness to the narcissist rather than on any real emotional connection.

A heightened sensitivity to criticism reveals another side of the narcissistic coin. Despite the appearance of confidence, criticism or failure can be experienced with intense shame or anger, often triggering disproportionate reactions. This fragility highlights a gap between the idealized self-image and reality, making it difficult for the narcissistic person to handle negative feedback or anything that contradicts their perceived superiority.

A narcissist often seeks to build a system of "mirrors" around themselves by using other people to reflect back the image they want to see.

This is the structure of the "mirror game":

- Self-Projection: builds an ideal identity to present in specific contexts.
- Expectations: forms assumptions about how others might perceive this constructed identity.
- Positive Confirmation: welcomes with satisfaction those who reflect back the desired image.
- Cognitive Dissonance: experiences disappointment and discomfort when the image reflected by others does not align with the one intentionally or unconsciously created.

The masks of the narcissist

Narcissists often build a highly flattering self-image, almost as if they were wearing a "mask" to appear more charming, powerful, or worthy of admiration in the eyes of others. They expect special treatment, as if they were different from everyone else.

This is because, deep down, they may feel insecure or not good enough. The mask serves to protect them from these uncomfortable feelings. It becomes a mechanism of self-defense and survival.

The mask protects the narcissist's fragile ego, hiding insecurities, fears, and feelings of inadequacy.

By wearing a mask of success, competence, or superiority, the narcissist seeks to secure admiration and approval from others.

These masks allow them to manipulate people by presenting a carefully crafted image designed to influence, seduce, or control.

Types of Masks
Below are the main categories of narcissistic masks:

The Mask of Grandiosity: projects an image of success, power, and invulnerability while hiding feelings of insecurity or inferiority.

The Mask of Seduction: used to attract and charm others by emphasizing physical appeal, charisma, or intelligence — depending on what the narcissist believes is most desirable.

The Mask of Victimhood: presents the narcissist as unfairly treated or unfortunate, seeking empathy and attention while often deflecting responsibility for their actions.

The Mask of Perfectionism: portrays a flawless and superior self-image in an effort to conceal any failure or imperfection.

These masks are interchangeable, shifting according to the situation and the role the narcissist wishes to play in order to shine.

Identity crisis

Imagine an actor who is so skilled at playing his roles that, at the end of every performance, he forgets who he is when he's not on stage. Every day, he puts on a different mask, becoming a hero, a king, or an adventurer, receiving applause and admiration from the audience. This makes him feel important and loved, but only when he's wearing those masks.

However, once he returns home, when the makeup is off and he looks at himself in the mirror, he realizes he no longer knows who he truly is. He has lost himself in constantly playing someone else, and that endless search for approval through his characters has left an emptiness inside.

He doesn't know what he likes, what he truly wants from life, or how he feels—unless it's through the eyes of another persona.

This actor, with his many masks, represents the narcissist in an identity crisis.

He lives for admiration and validation from others, but this dependency makes him unable to connect with his true essence. Without an audience, he feels lost, incapable of appreciating or even recognizing who he is without those masks. His life is a continuous performance, where the need to always be in the spotlight to feel worthy pulls him further away from the chance to discover and accept his real self.

Masks are essentially performative versions of the self that may initially be adopted for specific purposes, such as gaining social or professional success.

Over time, however, if these masks are worn constantly, the line between the authentic self and the performative self can become blurred, leaving the individual uncertain about who they truly are. Narcissistic masks are maintained and adjusted based on others' reactions and approval. This extreme dependence on external validation can erode a person's sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, making it difficult to assess or appreciate their own worth without someone else's judgment. While constantly seeking admiration and affection, the masks prevent genuine and meaningful connections with others.

This can lead to a deep sense of isolation and loneliness, as relationships based on façades rarely fulfill core emotional needs.
The problem arises when the individual does not recognize themselves in the reality around them and deems that reality unacceptable.

An identity crisis can be triggered by various experiences that challenge the narcissistic façade, such as public failures, harsh criticism, major shifts in personal or professional relationships, or even a moment of spontaneous self-reflection that reveals the gap between the authentic self and the version shown to the world.

Let's pause for a moment and consider how many times we've witnessed these psychological patterns—either in ourselves or in people we know—throughout our lives. It's almost impossible to escape them.

How is a narcissist born?

- **Overvaluation and Idolization:** parents who overvalue the child, praising them as superior to others without real foundation, can contribute to the development of an inflated sense of self-importance.

- **Emotional Detachment and Neglect:** paradoxically, the opposite dynamic—emotional coldness, constant criticism, or neglect—can also fuel pathological narcissism. The child may develop narcissistic traits as a defense mechanism to protect their self-esteem from emotional wounds.

- **Unrealistic Expectations:** parents who place unattainable expectations on the child or only show appreciation based on performance and success may instill the belief that personal worth is tied solely to visible achievement and external validation.

- **Defense Against Inferiority:** narcissism can develop as an unconscious attempt to defend against feelings of inferiority and vulnerability. By presenting a grandiose self to the world, the narcissist tries to shield themselves from the pain and shame of not feeling good enough.

- **Identification with the Aggressor:** in some cases, the child may identify with a narcissistic or aggressive parent, unconsciously adopting their traits as a survival strategy.

Types of Narcissism

Grandiose Narcissism (Overt) is marked by traits of grandiosity, dominance, and superiority. This type of narcissist displays excessive self-confidence, ambition, assertiveness, and a relentless pursuit of admiration and success. They stand out for their sense of entitlement, expectations of preferential treatment, and a tendency to exploit others for personal gain, often showing arrogant and overbearing behavior.

Hidden Narcissism (Covert) is characterized by introversion and hypersensitivity, masking narcissistic ambitions behind a facade of modesty or false humility. Although they may appear shy or insecure, internally they are consumed by fantasies of greatness and a deep desire for admiration. They expect others to recognize their supposed exceptionalism without having to state it openly.

Vulnerable Narcissism, is defined by sensitivity, insecurity, and shame. While maintaining fantasies of grandeur, these individuals are intensely concerned with how they are perceived by others and display heightened sensitivity to criticism. Their self-esteem is highly unstable and overly dependent on external validation, which can lead to feelings of helplessness and rage when expectations are unmet.

Balanced Narcissism reflects narcissistic traits that can be considered socially acceptable or even beneficial, such as self-confidence, ambition, and leadership. These individuals manage to use their narcissistic traits functionally, achieving social and professional success without necessarily harming others.

Malignant Narcissism combines narcissistic grandiosity with elements of aggression, sadism, and paranoia. This type goes beyond a mere lack of empathy, showing a tendency toward destructive and manipulative behaviors that often have serious negative effects on those around them.

Somatic and Cerebral Narcissism are defined by the object of grandiosity. The somatic narcissist focuses on the body, beauty, and sexuality, while the cerebral narcissist fixates on intelligence, academic achievements, and mental abilities.

Sexual Narcissism emphasizes the importance of seduction and sexual conquest as validations of one's desirability and superiority. This type of narcissist constantly seeks admiration and validation through sexual achievements, valuing relationships primarily for the success in seduction rather than emotional intimacy or genuine connection.

Ecological Narcissism is characterized by an excessive focus on environmentalism and eco-friendly practices as an extension of the self, where concern for the planet serves more to boost one's self-image than to express genuine care for the Earth.

Spiritual Narcissism is a form of narcissism in which an individual uses spirituality or religious practice as a means of projecting moral or spiritual superiority, often disregarding the true teachings or values of the path in favor of self-aggrandizement.

Rather than rigidly identifying with a single narcissistic type, it is more accurate to view individuals as exhibiting a blend of narcissistic traits that overlap and intertwine. For instance, a person may generally adopt an overt, grandiose style but display vulnerable narcissistic traits when facing disappointment or criticism. Likewise, somatic and cerebral traits can coexist, reflecting a need for admiration both for physical and intellectual qualities.

It is also important to note that narcissism can be **situational**. In other words, narcissistic traits may emerge or intensify in specific contexts, such as in competitive work environments or romantic relationships under stress.

Narcissists are often skilled manipulators—but manipulation is a broader topic that extends beyond narcissism. It is something that, in varying degrees and contexts, touches all of us.

Manipulation
at its most basic level, is a strategy we use to influence others to do what we want, often working subtly, without making our true intentions obvious. This method of interaction relies on the ability to discreetly guide another person's actions or thoughts so that the outcome appears to be a natural development of the situation rather than the result of direct external influence.

Here are some examples of manipulative techniques:

- Imagine a broker trying to convince you to join a particular financial investment. He tells you about other people who have invested and gained significant returns, implying that if you don't act, you might miss out on a unique opportunity. This technique is based on the fear of missing out (FOMO), a form of manipulation that plays on your anxiety about being excluded from a potentially advantageous opportunity. It is especially common among scammers.

- Now imagine you're at a shopping mall. You're eyeing an item you like but find it a bit expensive. The salesperson starts telling you that you deserve it after all the hard work you've done recently, and that you shouldn't worry too much about the price when it comes to rewarding yourself. This is an example of manipulation through **self-indulgence**, where you are made to feel justified in taking an action you might otherwise consider irrational, tapping into your desire for gratification.

- Imagine working in a company where one of your superiors asks you to stay late to finish a project. Instead of simply requesting it, your boss reminds you how they "favored" you during a recent promotion or "looked the other way" when you made a mistake that could have cost you. They use phrases like "If it weren't for me, you wouldn't even be in this position" or "Remember when I saved you from that big mistake? This is the perfect chance to return the favor."
  Here, the manipulative tactic used is **guilt and fear of retaliation**: you're reminded of what was given or forgiven, creating implicit pressure to repay through loyalty and sacrifice, fearing the loss of support or facing negative consequences.

- Now think about choosing which streaming subscription to sign up for. The platform starts listing an overwhelming number of options, packages, add-ons, and prices, making it hard to keep track. Finally, it offers you a "simple solution" (usually the all-inclusive plan), which feels like relief and you accept. This is the **confusion tactic**: creating a problem that only the manipulator can solve for you.

- Consider a situation where a friend wants you to go to an event you're not interested in. They start complimenting you on how you're always great company and how fun your outings always are. Feeling flattered, you find yourself thinking about going, even if you don't want to. Here, **flattery** is the manipulation tool: by boosting your self-esteem, your friend makes you more receptive to their request.

- Imagine a partner who wants the other to give up a hobby or stop seeing certain friends to spend more time together. Instead of discussing it openly, they might say something like: "It seems like you prefer spending time with your friends more than with me. Maybe I should find someone who values being together more." Here, **emotional manipulation** appears as a veiled threat of abandonment, aiming to provoke fear and insecurity in the partner, pushing them to change behavior to avoid losing the relationship.

- Consider a partner who wants to have the final say on where to go on vacation. They might say: "After everything I've done for you, I thought you could at least let me have this." In this scenario, the manipulator uses **gratitude and emotional debt**, trying to make the other person feel selfish or ungrateful for not agreeing. It's a form of **emotional blackmail** that forces the partner to give in just to avoid guilt.

- Think about a partner who wants more attention and decides to make the other jealous by openly flirting in front of them. This tactic is designed to provoke an emotional reaction (jealousy) to manipulate the partner into showing more affection or attention as a sign of attachment. **Jealousy** here is exploited as a tool to pressure the other into reaffirming their commitment to the relationship.

And let it be clear, what's written here is not meant to create new manipulators, but to destroy them.
Knowledge is the most effective preventive weapon there is.

CHAPTER IV
MENTAL STATES

Emotions are quick, automatic, and short-lived reactions triggered by an internal or external stimulus.
Feelings are the conscious and mental elaboration of emotions, more enduring and complex.
Mental states are broad and prolonged cognitive conditions that shape how we filter, perceive, and experience reality. They represent our psychological climate.

The mental states we will explore are: serenity, happiness, depression, anxiety, and flow.

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Base formula:
Mental State = Emotions + Feelings + Recurring
Thoughts + Physiological Factors + Context

Example code:
absence of real or perceived threats
+ safe environment
+ non-anxious or non-intrusive thoughts
→ mental state: serenity
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Serenity is a condition of deep calm in which no tension, urgency, or inner conflict is felt.
If the necessary parameters are not met, serenity cannot be fully experienced.

Happiness
Until now, it's been the big elephant in the room. It wasn't listed among the emotions, nor among the feelings. And yet hatred was there, love was there, joy was there. So what the hell is this happiness we're so obsessed with?

Happiness is a mental state. It is the sum of a series of conditions and values that we unconsciously set for ourselves.

And happiness is often confused with serenity. Many people might be happy without realizing it, simply because they are unaware they are not serene, leading them into a state of confusion and making them doubt their own happiness. Serenity is a form of renunciation — of every kind of struggle, even the ones you win — and of every worry, which is incredibly hard to adopt in our fast-paced capitalist society, always projecting toward future expectations.

It's entirely possible to be happy without realizing it, because serenity is missing — the kind of calm that allows us to recognize it. When the mind is restless, future-oriented, or immersed in the anxiety of doing and achieving, even happiness can feel unstable or insufficient, generating confusion, dissatisfaction, or even existential doubt.

I agree that **Serenity + Happiness = absolute bliss**.

But happiness doesn't depend solely on serenity. For example: an athlete during a competition may be happy to be playing, yet not serene.

There are other factors that shape its emergence, the most important being: **ego satisfaction**.
The more your ego feels fulfilled, the happier you are.
But be careful: it's not the only factor, and certainly not the most stable.

The freedom to choose what to do, when, and with whom.
There is no sustainable happiness if you're forced to live by someone else's rules (a nice dilemma for our society). Autonomy is power over your own happiness.
The mind needs to feel active, alive, engaged, in a state of growth — even slow growth. You can't stay happy for long in boredom.
Happiness contains elements of play, discovery, and expression.

You need to identify and properly calibrate your values. Only then can you truly be happy.
All the drama around the pursuit of happiness, and how complex or mysterious it is to reach, sounds like total bullshit to me.

You just have to understand every single mechanism and calibrate it correctly. That's the recipe for a functional existence.

And I say this as someone who, despite being young, has been happy very little — only now am I fully aware of why. I was using the wrong metrics, I had a completely toxic value system, and above all, I didn't know how I worked.
Once I figured it out — after a long time spent researching and reprocessing information — I was able to systematically tackle each problem.

It's not an instant process. Time plays its role. And along the way, I found the formula that works for me:

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physical well-being + ego satisfaction + self-awareness + objective knowledge + desire to improve = happiness
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To achieve complete serenity, it will still take me some time — especially because without financial independence, it's hard to truly feel that way. But I remain convinced that my approach aligns well with the capitalist system and will lead me to the results I'm seeking.

Depression

Depression is a pathological condition that deeply affects how we feel, think, and manage daily activities. It's not just about feeling sad or down for a few days; it is something more intense and persistent that impacts one's ability to function and experience pleasure in life.

The causes of depression are complex and multifactorial, involving a combination of genetics, biochemistry, environmental, and psychological factors. Some people may be genetically predisposed, meaning depression can "run" in the family.

Changes in brain neurotransmitters, as discussed at the beginning of the book, play a significant role. Environmental factors such as stressful life events, loss, troubled relationships, or difficult living conditions can trigger depression, especially in those who are already predisposed. Furthermore, certain personality structures or negative thinking patterns, such as pathological narcissism, can increase vulnerability to depression.

The symptoms of depression vary greatly, but commonly include a persistent sense of sadness, emptiness, and hopelessness. People may lose interest and pleasure in activities they once enjoyed.

Depression literally means "to press down", "to lower", "to sink".

Neuroimaging studies show reduced activity in key areas responsible for energy, motivation, and pleasure, such as the prefrontal cortex, the limbic system, and dopamine circuits. Essentially, the depressed brain operates more slowly, with less fuel and less response to positive stimuli.

Serotonin levels and other mood-related neurotransmitters also decrease, and over time even the hippocampus can shrink, worsening stress regulation and memory.

Those who experience it truly feel like something is crushing them from the inside.

Sadness, Bad Mood or Depression?

Sadness is a natural emotional reaction to difficult or painful life situations, such as losing a job, the end of a relationship, or other unfortunate events. It is temporary, proportional to the triggering event, and does not prevent someone from carrying out daily activities in the long term. Bad mood is also a feeling of dissatisfaction or irritability that can come and go, often influenced by stress, fatigue, or momentary frustrations. Both are normal parts of human experience, and they do not significantly impair a person's ability to function in everyday life.
Depressive disorder, on the other hand, is something much more complex and debilitating.

It is characterized by a range of symptoms including a profound loss of interest or pleasure in activities, significant changes in weight or appetite, sleep disturbances, fatigue and loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, difficulty concentrating, and thoughts of death or suicide. These symptoms are persistent, typically lasting most of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks. Clinical depression significantly impairs the individual's ability to function at work, in school, or within social and family relationships.

"Imagine the difference between a cloudy day, which may bring a sense of melancholy but still lets you glimpse the possibility that the sun might return, and a long, endless winter, where the cold seeps into your bones and the sun seems to have vanished forever. Sadness and bad moods are like that cloudy day: temporary, with the hope that things will get better. Clinical depression, on the other hand, is that long winter: a condition that seems to crush all hope, making it hard to remember what the warmth of the sun on your skin feels like, or even to believe it will return."

Depression is not simply a condition one can "overcome" through willpower (as is often suggested); it is a medical condition that requires understanding, treatment, and support.

Do you remember, at the beginning of the book, when I talked about the "couriers" (neurons), the "mailboxes" (synapses), and so on?
Now you can better understand the origin and functioning of the depressive state, because those mechanisms are no longer working correctly.

These changes have a significant impact not only on brain function but also on the functioning of various organs and bodily systems, due to the tight interconnection between the brain and the rest of the body—such as the digestive system, stomach and intestines, which are directly connected via the vagus nerve, or the heart, the immune system, and so on. When left untreated and prolonged over time, depression slowly poisons and destroys the body.

But as I mentioned earlier, this condition can also stem from an unhealthy ego—one that thinks and reasons in distorted ways, adopting faulty mental frameworks. Because remember: it's like the chicken-and-egg dilemma. The issue with the human mind is not "which comes first," but the fact that internal and external constantly influence and reshape each other in tangible ways.
An unhealthy ego can make the body ill, and an unhealthy body can damage the ego.

Suicide

Suicide is, paradoxically, the coherent execution of a mental system that has exhausted all its variables. People who die by suicide do not want to die. They want to stop feeling. When suffering becomes chronic and the brain enters a stable negative forecasting state, every possible future is evaluated as worsening or meaningless. In computational terms, the brain stops simulating alternatives: the model of the world shuts down.

But here is the least understood point: suicide is often the result of excessive conscious processing, not the lack of it. It is not due to the absence of reasoning, but rather its **hyperfunctioning under adverse cognitive conditions**.

The prefrontal cortex—the area responsible for planning and envisioning the future—does not shut down; on the contrary, it continues to work in a loop, endlessly searching for solutions until it collapses. When every mental iteration leads to the same endpoint (irreversible suffering), the idea of suicide emerges as the only logically consistent escape.

A person can survive for months under terrible conditions. But why, then, on an ordinary evening, do they finally decide?

Because the mind, in an extreme attempt to reset the pain, opens a window of anesthetic clarity. This is known as the "**calm before the act**": a moment when, after days of inner chaos, an apparent peace emerges. The body is still devastated, but the mind has finally "made a decision." The decision-making load vanishes, cortisol drops, the heartbeat stabilizes.

That's when the act takes place—not during the chaos, but after it, in that moment of inner stillness.

Here lies the real short-circuit: the rational part of the brain is sabotaged by the **perception of pain**, and the solution appears rational **only because the system has stopped believing in future branches**.

Suicide is the result of a completed simulation.

But wait... what about our unbeatable and insatiable ego? Doesn't it defend us? Doesn't it fight back? How can the instinct for survival suddenly vanish?

The answer lies within the ego itself: the decision to commit suicide is the ego's ultimate attempt to exert control over itself and over an existence that has become unbearable, to choose an escape from a pain perceived as endless.

Pleasure in Pain

The complexity of human emotions sometimes leads us to find comfort in emotional states that, logically, may seem undesirable—like sadness or self-pity. In sadness, and in some cases of depression, there can be a paradoxical experience of "pleasure in pain."

This doesn't mean that people actively seek out suffering or situations that reinforce their sadness (that's another story), but rather that there can be a **comforting component** in the experience of sadness itself.
This may arise from various psychological and emotional factors.
First of all, **sadness and self-pity can serve as internal validation mechanisms.**

When one feels sad and allows themselves to sit with that emotion, it's as if they're giving themselves permission to acknowledge and accept their pain. This process can be **unconsciously rewarding**, as it validates one's inner experience, making them feel understood—even if only by themselves.

Furthermore, there's a social dimension in which expressing sadness or melancholy can lead to support, attention, and care from others.

This **positive reinforcement**, although born from a negative state, can create a **cycle where sadness becomes unconsciously desirable** for the empathetic responses it elicits in others.

Depression, however, complicates this dynamic, as it can lead to isolation and the sense that others can't truly understand or ease one's inner pain.
Self-pity can also serve as a **defense mechanism**, shielding us from external expectations.

In a state of sadness or depression, the expectations placed on us—both by others and ourselves—may decrease.
This lowering of expectations can offer a sense of relief from pressure, though it's only a temporary escape and doesn't solve the root causes of pain.

From a neurobiological perspective, the idea of "pleasure in pain" may be partially explained by the **overlapping brain circuits** involved in processing both pleasure and pain.

Studies have shown that areas like the nucleus accumbens and the amygdala are active in both types of responses. These brain regions are regulated by neurotransmitters such as **dopamine** and serotonin, which play central roles in mood and motivation.

Dopamine: although commonly linked to pleasure and reward, dopamine is also involved in pain processing. The complexity of the dopaminergic system means it can be activated by both positive and negative stimuli, providing a kind of **neurochemical "reward"** even in contexts of pain or negative thinking. This might explain why some people feel an unusual satisfaction in thoughts or actions that are, on the surface, painful or self-defeating.

Serotonin: Serotonin levels—often associated with mood regulation—also influence how we experience both pain and pleasure. While low serotonin is linked to depression, its role is not limited to promoting well-being. In some contexts, the serotonergic system helps regulate our emotional response to pain, shaping how we might experience the paradox of "pleasure in pain."

Psychologically, this phenomenon can be seen as a **coping mechanism** that allows people to find **a sense of control or meaning** in otherwise unbearable situations.
Pain or negative thoughts can become familiar, and this familiarity—though strange—can offer a **real sense of comfort**.

But here's a reflection that comes to mind: the process of self-pity can stimulate a form of introspection that, although painful, also offers an opportunity for self-exploration and cognitive growth.

As in my case: as a teenager, in a depressive state that also held a strange satisfaction, I would deliberately meditate while in negative moods to dig deeper and discover more about myself.

That's where my curiosity was born, which eventually led me to real self-awareness and an understanding of these mechanisms—mechanisms that, once recognized, stopped working (in my case). But of course, this is just a very brief and simplified glimpse of my experience.

Back to our topic, I therefore consider introspection both legitimate and necessary, even if it sometimes brings a trace of melancholy. Still, be careful not to fall into the spiral.

Because we can become dependent on the satisfaction that comes from personal growth through painful introspection, which may no longer be as rewarding as it was in the beginning, and instead becomes the author of depression and the vicious cycle of self-sabotage.

Learn to recognize this mechanism when you look inside yourself, otherwise you will get lost.

ANXIETY

Anxiety is a complex mental state that all of us experience to varying degrees throughout our lives. It is both a normal and functional condition and a possible pathological manifestation that may require medical intervention.

The origin of anxiety is a story woven through the centuries, an inheritance carved into our DNA like an ancient hieroglyph that tells tales of survival.

In ancient times, this sensation was the radar that guided our ancestors away from predators lurking in the shadows, a sixth sense that warned of danger even before it became visible. In many ways, it was their superpower, granting them the speed and reflexes necessary to face or flee from the invisible threats of the wild.
This radar, a marvel of evolutionary biology, was refined over countless generations, becoming ever more sensitive and accurate, a true jewel of ancient technology.

However, in today's calmer and more predictable world, the radar remains as alert and overprotective as ever. This is a case where the world has changed far faster than our biology.
The challenge, then, is not to shut down the radar—after all, its ability to warn us of danger is still valuable—but to learn how to interpret its signals more accurately, distinguishing between real and false alerts.

We must strive to understand our past, recognizing that anxiety is not an enemy to be defeated, but rather an ancient ally that must be listened to, understood, and—when necessary—gently guided toward calm.

There are various forms of anxiety, each with its own characteristics:

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** chronic and excessive worry about multiple aspects of daily life.

- **Panic Disorder**: sudden and intense episodes of terror or irrational fear.

- **Specific Phobia**: irrational fear of specific objects, situations, or activities (often rooted in the unconscious, likely due to events from early childhood).

- **Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia):** intense fear of being judged or humiliated in social situations.

- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** anxiety that arises following exposure to a traumatic event.

The void

"Sometimes, I feel as though there's a vast empty space inside me—a desolate area that seems to swallow every emotion, leaving me in a state of apathy and indifference I can't explain. It's not that I don't want to feel; it's more that I can't find anything that truly fills that void, nothing that makes me feel alive or passionate like I once did. And in that emptiness, there's a silence that weighs heavy, an absence of sound that becomes deafening.

From this void arises a subtle but constant anxiety, as if I were waiting for something to happen—something that might give meaning to that internal space—but the waiting is in vain. The anxiety grows in not knowing how to fill that void, in the fear that maybe I'll never find anything that can.

This sense of emptiness makes me constantly question whether I'm missing something fundamental to my happiness or whether I'm simply drifting through life without truly grasping its meaning. This constant reflection feeds my anxiety, making it difficult to focus on the present or find joy in the little things. It's an internal struggle, an attempt to escape from a shadow that is, in truth, a part of me."

One of the greatest triggers of anxiety is *the void*. This sensation of emptiness is not merely the absence of something tangible; it's a lack of meaning—a kind of inner silence that weighs more than a deafening noise. When we face this void, it can feel as though we're trying to catch the wind with our hands: the more we strive to grasp it, the more it slips away.

This fruitless search for meaning and purpose can become fertile ground for anxiety. It's not so much the fear of what we *know* that unsettles us, but rather the anguish in the face of the *unknown*—the indeterminate emptiness the void represents. We ask ourselves: *"Which direction should I take?"*, *"What makes me whole?"*, *"What's wrong with me?"*, *"Why can't I feel happy or fulfilled?"*, *"What am I missing?"*. These questions, born from the void, can trigger a spiral of worries, doubts, and fears that feed anxiety—without ever finding satisfying answers.

This constant uncertainty becomes a burden, a silent companion that distorts our perception of reality and activates the alarm bell of our old friend the **Radar**, who simply wants to protect us.

From our questions, it concludes that we are in danger. And so it prepares us, just like in ancient times, to fight or flee—even though we're just curled up in bed, in a fetal position.

Loss of control and fear of dying

"When it's time to fall asleep, my lungs, which just moments earlier were working in silent harmony with the rest of my body, suddenly begin to gasp for air with growing desperation. Each breath feels inadequate, like I'm trying to inhale through a straw, and the hunger for air becomes so sharp that my chest lifts, searching for every crumb of oxygen. I'm forced to breathe through my mouth. Meanwhile, my heart seems to forget its steady, safe rhythm. It begins pounding with a force that feels like it could explode, each beat a cannon shot echoing through my chest. Then, just as suddenly, it slows down—threatening to stop altogether—leaving me gripped by the fear that any beat might be the last."

The ultimate anxiety trigger is the fear of losing control, and by extension, of dying.

It's essential to understand that the essence of the concept of *having control* does not lie in *controlling everything*, but in being aware that *not everything is under our control*. To delude ourselves into thinking we're omnipotent is a critical mistake. You can control your actions, but not things that have a life of their own—like the unexpected twists of daily life, or even your own organs, which work autonomously.

Your heart doesn't need your permission to beat. Your lungs breathe. Your stomach digests. Your body already knows what to do. Letting go isn't weakness. It's wisdom.

Calm Down, Understand, and Resolve

During an anxiety attack, your perception of reality becomes distorted without you even realizing it. You're pulled into a vortex of thoughts and worries that seem to escape all rational control. This "what if" spiral becomes the dominant narrative—an endless stream of catastrophic scenarios that unravel with such vividness and force that they start to feel inevitable.

It begins with a negative thought—maybe small or insignificant—but it acts like a spark on a dry field primed with doubt. From there, the mind, already inclined to seek confirmation of its fears, starts constructing an intricate web of negative possibilities. *"What if I lose my job?"*, *"What if I'm really sick?"*, *"What if I can't get out of this?"* Each "what if" adds another layer to this illusory bubble, pulling the person further from objective reality and deeper into a sea of hypotheticals. The more the anxiety layers up, the worse the symptoms become.

In this state, clarity of thought fades, giving way to a distorted interpretation of reality shaped by anxiety. The mind, caught in the vortex, becomes unable to distinguish between what's likely and what's merely possible—treating every thought as a forecast of disaster. The illusory bubble amplifies every fear and doubt, making escape from this maze of negative thoughts feel nearly impossible.

Solutions?
Keeping in mind that certain cases require medical treatment, and that anxiety is often defeated gradually through therapy, here are a few strategies that helped me personally during the process:

- **Identification Process**: Stop and take a second. Where am I? Is there anything or anyone threatening me right now? What exactly is endangering my life? Can I see, touch, or identify anything real or tangible that's causing this panic?

This immediately brings awareness, pulling you out of the vortex-bubble before it thickens and worsens the symptoms.

But awareness alone doesn't always stop the symptoms, even though it gradually weakens them by breaking the fear of *"what's happening to me?"*
In the beginning, you'll need other supports.

- **Breathing**: now that you know you're safe and that there's no immediate danger in the here and now, you need to calm the physical manifestations of anxiety. You're probably not breathing properly. Inhale slowly for 3–5 seconds, then exhale slowly for another 3–5 seconds. Repeat until your breath becomes more steady and relaxed.

- **External focus:** while keeping track of your breath, start to shift your attention to what's around you instead of staying trapped in your head. Pick an object nearby and focus on it attentively. Describe out loud its color, shape, texture, and every detail. If you're in a place where it's possible, use the **5 senses technique**. Anchor yourself in the present moment:
  Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste. If you're in an unsuitable environment, imagine the smells and tastes, describing them to yourself.

- **Music**: choose slow-paced (to sync heart rate and breathing), peaceful (not sad), and calming sounds. Lo-fi, nature sounds, or green/black/brown noise can be very helpful.

- **Positive visualization**: imagine and mentally place yourself in a space or with a person that makes you feel safe and relaxed. Focus on the sensory details—sounds, smells, textures.

These are temporary methods that may help you manage the moment while you work on the root causes with a professional.

Flow state

My favorite mental state, without a doubt. It is the peak of the magnificence our mind can ever reach.

Flow is not simply concentration. It's a perceptual cancellation in which the mind stops being a subject performing an action and becomes the very space where the action unfolds. You're no longer "you writing, creating, playing, fighting" — you are the writing, the motion, the note, the trajectory. Thought doesn't precede action: they merge into the same instant. It's a condition in which consciousness is reduced, but not in a negative way — everything unnecessary is simply switched off. Judgment disappears. The narrative self dissolves. Psychological time bends. And the body, in its entirety, needs no instruction. It already knows.

It's a form of neurochemical ecstasy optimized for performance. You don't think *"I'm doing it."* You don't think at all. The flow state is living proof that the human mind performs at its best when it stops trying to control itself.

You enter flow only when there is a perfect balance between the challenge's difficulty and your own competence. If it's too easy, you get bored. If it's too hard, you freeze. But when the difficulty exactly meets your ability, down to the last detail, your internal reality syncs with the external one.

```
Sample code:
If (stimulating and clear activity)
and (skill = challenge)
and (maximum focus)
→ then → mental state = flow
```

CHAPTER V
WHO WE ARE

Are we really sure we know what 'humanity' means? Because I believe we're victims of a false narrative about ourselves, about our origin, and about our true Nature. Try observing how society works. Wherever you look, the same model dominates: those who produce more, in less time, with fewer errors — win.
Those who remain cold, stable, and consistent — win.
Those who optimize their relationships, emotions, and thoughts — win.

Today's "winner" is the human who has trained themselves to operate like a machine.
What do they do in military training? They repeat drills to the point of exhaustion until everything becomes automatic. The goal is to block emotion and respond through automation.

CEOs? Same logic. Fixed routines, timed schedules, textbook emotional management. Every decision is geared toward efficiency.

The average worker? Same actions, same hours, same goals. It's not the inventor who gets rewarded, but the executor. Any deviation is a problem.

The athlete? Precision training, precise nutrition, precise lifestyle, all aimed at reaching the best parameters for the best performance.

Be it war, business, sports or private life — the context changes, not the logic:
You must function, not feel.
You must produce, not reflect.
You must act, not think.

Because thinking, reflecting and feeling must already be embedded in the instant of action — not separate elements, but part of one flowing moment.

Society sends us a clear message:
To excel, you must automate.
To win, you must become a machine.

But this isn't just a cultural or capitalist product — it reflects a deep evolutionary principle rooted in Nature itself. Natural selection does not reward uniqueness. It rewards replicable efficiency.
In the long run, what survives is not what believes itself special — but what works.

And the human being, despite our mythologies of freedom, soul, and creativity, has been shaped (by Nature) to be an executable system.

It responds to stimuli, activates circuits, reinforces habits. It is not a biological anomaly — it is an evolutionary machine optimized for its context.

We live according to the logical rules of Nature, and Nature's logic is brutally elegant:

- **If a structure can be measured, it can be improved.**
- **If it can be improved, it can be selected.**
- **If it can be selected, it can be replicated.**

This is how we evolved: not as free beings, but as adaptive code. **Capitalism simply takes this concept to the extreme.** And that's why, so far, it's the only pragmatically functional system we've found.

My vision isn't a rejection of humanity. On the contrary — it's a return to what we've always been.
Code. System. Highly optimized biology.
DNA, the basis of our being, is dynamic code: instructions, sequences, executions.

Our brain works through patterns, associations, automatisms. We've always behaved like machines — just slower, more confused, less intelligent, less aware.

The uncomfortable truth is that we may never have truly been free. We only *thought* we were because we didn't understand the system. But now that we're starting to understand it, we realize we are simply a more complex adaptive algorithm.
And emotions then? Aren't they what sets us apart from the systems we've invented?

YES…
But they, too, follow an architecture — depending on neurotransmitters, hormones, environmental stimuli, etc. They arise from biochemical systems with precise rules.
But this **doesn't** mean they're not valuable — on the contrary. They are special because they allow us to perceive something **beyond** objective reality — to make tangible what otherwise wouldn't be.

Emotions and feelings are our most distinctive trait, because they let us live experiences that do not exist materially. Love, joy, wonder — these are not concrete; they don't objectively exist.
But our brain allows us to filter and perceive reality in a completely unique way — a planet illuminated, surrounded by darkness — and yet we *feel* it differently.

So perhaps, we're **not becoming less human** — We're just discovering our **true Natural Origin**.

And maybe, the machine — in the sense of an extremely complex and dynamic mechanism — is our most authentic state.

We unknowingly invented what we've always been — like a god creating in its own image.

Because We Are: Deus Ex Machina.

End

BONUS EXTRA
Unreleased content – Second Edition

CHAPTER VI
ANALYSIS

The following are analyses taken from my blog, useful and consistent with the meaning of the book. They will offer you an even broader understanding of my thinking and how I perceive human and societal structures.

APPEARANCES ARE DECEIVING

From beauty, we expect goodness, and from goodness, beauty; from ugliness, we expect wickedness, and from wickedness, ugliness.
It's as if our mind automatically makes this pairing: from beauty, we expect positivity, and from positivity, we expect beauty; whereas from ugliness, we expect negativity, and from negativity, ugliness.(And by ugliness, I mean anything that doesn't align with the average standards of beauty.)

But why is this?
Because that's how we evolved.
At the beginning of our history, beauty was a direct signal of health: a pleasant appearance indicated physical strength, the absence of disease, a higher likelihood of survival, and, consequently, better chances of reproductive success. Beauty was vital.

Conversely, "ugliness" could stem from illnesses, infections, or genetic defects — unconscious signals that something, biologically, wasn't working as it should.

As society evolved, another factor was added: lifestyle.
Being healthy and maintaining a well-kept appearance was not just a matter of genetics, but also of economic and social conditions.
Those who belonged to wealthier classes lived better, ate better, had better healthcare — and all of this was reflected outwardly.
On the other hand, the poor, living in precarious conditions with limited hygiene and scarce access to healthcare, were more prone to illnesses that not only compromised their health but also left visible marks on their bodies.
And so, inevitably, physical appearance became a status symbol.

But let's be clear: beauty standards have never been universal or fixed.
They have always been children of their time, shaped by circumstances and popular culture.
For example, in certain historical periods, having pale skin was a sign of privilege: it meant you didn't have to work under the sun in the fields.
In other eras, like modern society, a tan became the opposite: a symbol of someone who could afford to travel, vacation, and enjoy leisure time.

Or consider body weight: in times of famine, being overweight was a sign of wealth; in times of abundance, it became a sign of neglect.
In short, the body has always been a kind of social billboard: it told others who you were, what you could afford, and how much you were worth in their eyes.

And here's another important piece of the puzzle.
Due to structurally social (and not biological) reasons, marginalized and desperate segments of the population were statistically more likely to commit crimes.
This slowly led to the association of "ugly" with "bad" and "beautiful" with "good": a labeling that deeply rooted itself in the collective imagination, continually reinforced throughout history in stories, fairy tales, art, religion, and films.
The villain has scars, dark circles, crooked teeth; the hero has smooth skin, harmonious features, a perfect smile. The witch is old and wrinkled; the princess is young and radiant.

This is where archetypes were born. And this is where our cultural biases begin.
A mechanism that makes this pattern even more insidious is the well-known **Halo Effect**: a cognitive bias where we extend a single positive characteristic — like beauty — to all other qualities of a person.

If someone appears physically attractive, at first glance we tend to unconsciously attribute to them intelligence, kindness, competence, without any real evidence. This mental shortcut is still active today, influencing judgments, social decisions, and opportunities.

Think, for instance, of a person dressed elegantly: they are immediately perceived as more competent and authoritative.
Or a product or an app with a sleek, attractive design: it automatically appears more reliable and of higher quality, even if its actual content is mediocre.
In relationships, a particularly attractive person receives more tolerance and understanding, even when their behavior doesn't truly deserve it.

To avoid falling into these perceptual traps, I suggest a simple mental exercise: try changing the wrapper. Try changing the appearance of the essence.
Imagine that same person, with the same moral and character qualities, but with a completely different physical appearance: would you still treat them the same way? Would you still grant them the same trust?
Or that product you admire so much: without that polished design, would its content — the part you actually use — still seem as valuable, or is it simply better packaged?
And finally, that impeccably dressed person: if they wore shabby clothes, would you still listen to them with the same attention?

It’s not uncommon for people to adjust their perception of others to fit the archetype or cultural label they already have in mind.
How many times in life have we said: "I hadn’t realized", or "they seemed different"?
In the end, it’s not that the signs were missing: we simply distorted what we were seeing, unconsciously putting a filter between us and reality.
A filter built from our expectations, our biases, from what we *wanted* to see rather than what actually was.
And that’s the most insidious part: we don’t judge the essence; we judge how well the appearance matches the mental models we already hold inside.

Compared to the past, today's dynamics are more complex: there is no longer just one dominant archetype, but a wide variety of labels, models, and conceptions.
Today, beauty is not automatically associated with goodness or intelligence; in some cultural or social contexts, it can even be linked to superficiality, vanity, or naivety. Conversely, non-conformity to aesthetic standards can be interpreted as a sign of depth, authenticity, or even brilliance.

And all this goes far beyond beauty itself: it reveals a fundamental flaw in how we perceive others based on appearance.

Aesthetic judgment hasn't disappeared — it has multiplied. Contemporary society now operates with multiple archetypes, multiple frameworks for interpreting appearance, making the link between looks and value more varied, but also more ambiguous.
So be careful with what you see — because that's where the old saying comes from: **appearances are deceiving**.

And yet, despite all this, although there is still much to be addressed and new, sophisticated dilemmas around aesthetic standards have arisen, I must give credit to my generation. Compared to the past, we have substantially improved the way we handle aesthetic, ethnic, gender, and other biases. We've started breaking down imposed standards and expanding social acceptance towards what is different — and that's the real key: We shouldn't respect others because they are like us, because we are not the same. We must respect and accept others *because* they are different — because we are all different.

THE GAME OF RELATIONSHIPS

What makes human interactions different from those with artificial intelligence systems?

What do we find fascinating in other human beings? We might answer: their uniqueness, their personality, the feeling that they give us something we don't have. But if we dig deeper, what we often seek — and don't always admit — is a form of validation. We want to be understood, wanted, even indulged. This is the most well-known and evident aspect: human egoism.

But can it all really be reduced to a mirror game of reflections and projections? In my opinion, no. That kind of pattern can at most be associated with narcissistic pathology, not with the intrinsic psychological structure of the average human being. There's another mechanism at play in relational interest: **tension**, or more precisely, **traction**. It's what draws us to others not because they confirm us, but because they challenge us, escape us, intrigue us. It's an interest that arises from **asymmetry**. And often, these two mechanisms — egoism and traction — come into conflict. One seeks confirmation, the other seeks uncertainty. The first wants coherence, the second craves instability.

It’s precisely from this friction that the real depth of our relational involvement is generated. We want others to be free not to align with what we want — for a form of emotional stimulation that’s hard to rationalize. This is one of our most unconscious desires, and yet, in my opinion, it’s built into how we’re made.

So, to clarify what has been said so far — and I stress this is a personal opinion, not a proven theory — there are two forces that regulate our involvement in relationships:

Egoism: the natural psychological drive to seek confirmation, utility, mirroring, emotional protection, and recognition. This is the mechanism that aims for internal stability and coherence.

And then there's the **force of traction**: the unconscious desire for the other to remain at least partially outside of our control. Here, interest is fueled by the gap between what we want and what we can actually obtain — between our need for confirmation and the other’s freedom not to provide it. This generates tension, evolution, and relational dynamics. It’s what makes us want more. It’s the force that leads to the most intense forms of satisfaction, because it puts even our egoism to the test — and expands it.

These two forces may seem in conflict, but they're complementary. On one hand, we want stability and coherence; on the other, we crave challenge and instability. Two types of "entertainment or pleasure," as similar as they are different. Two types of satisfaction that, in the end, are interdependent — because one partially relies on the other.

But beware: there is no primary or secondary force. Egoism and traction don't follow each other — they intertwine. Without the other, each becomes sterile or chaotic. It's in their unstable balance that real interest is born.

Our ego has a price to pay if it wants to participate in this game. Because positive outcomes aren't guaranteed — in fact, most of the time, they won't be what we hoped for.

It seems to me there's an implicit rule in how we perceive and process reality: **without exposure to the opposite of what we desire, we may not be able to feel anything at all.** And this raises questions: do we need to expose ourselves to suffering in order to experience happiness? Do we need to face defeat to truly savor victory? Do we have to live through disappointment to appreciate satisfaction? Do we have to go through side effects to reach the desired ones?

But I'm digressing too much. Back to our "Game of Relationships": at this point in my life, I've had — and still have — the opportunity to work in various AI-related environments. With access to multiple datasets and behavioral statistics, I've been surprised by several trends. They've led me to reflect on a fundamental question:

What are we actually looking for in others? Is it possible that humans will one day lose interest in interacting with other humans, preferring artificial systems instead? Is it possible that what we truly want is simply to be indulged?
Is it even possible to eliminate the force of traction?

My answer to that last question is: No, it's not possible. Or rather, it can be ignored, but never without consequences. The force of traction can be suppressed, avoided, denied — but not removed or permanently silenced. It's a structural component of our psychological architecture — whether we like it or not.

Egoism, if never challenged by tension or traction, consumes itself. It flattens out into total emotional numbness. But beware: even those who live only through traction-based relationships will, in the end, find themselves drained and emotionally dulled. Desires are constantly triggered but never nourished. Gratification is always postponed or sabotaged.

In both cases — egoism without challenge, or pure traction without stability — there's initial pleasure, yes, but it's short-lived, impossible to reproduce, and always ends in the same way: emotional emptiness.

So, returning to the main question — what do we actually find fascinating in others?
That they're never fully predictable. Never entirely available. They can contradict us, change, escape, reject. It's this uncertainty that holds our attention. The constant possibility that things won't go as expected. The dynamic tension of change and stimulation.

People seek coherence between thoughts, emotions, and actions. When someone confirms our internal state, tension is reduced. But if that coherence is too consistent, too stable, it becomes dull. Without dynamism, there's no stimulation. Without friction, no growth.
Humans are drawn to what they can partially control, but never fully. Too much control kills surprise. Too much chaos creates anxiety. It's the dynamic balance that makes an interaction truly engaging.

Even if an AI could simulate unpredictability, we'd know deep down that it's a designed illusion. And that alone changes everything. *(Or does it?)*

What if one day we truly preferred AI? It could happen — out of convenience or necessity. Artificial intelligences are always available, easily accessible, conflict-free, nonjudgmental, and require no competition.
The moral of the story, in my opinion, is this: the answer to what we find interesting in humans — compared to AI — may be something we'd rather not admit or accept. Because it would reveal our emotional and behavioral schematics. It would show that we are not as "magical" as we like to think — but instead, much like algorithms: complex, full of nuance, but still structured within a pattern…With nothing more than the illusion of free will.

It's not up to me to decide which interaction model will win out. Natural selection will take care of that.

This reflection isn't meant to be prescriptive. I'm not saying those are the correct mechanisms for "healthy" relationships. But I strongly suspect that our human satisfaction dynamics rely mostly on those exact — and often uncomfortable — mechanisms.
So no, this thought isn't suited for those with a romantic view of humanity or life. And to add something else: in my view, human beings are not naturally built to follow ethical principles or moral codes. On this planet, survival rules seem pretty clear — so it shouldn't be surprising that our instincts are, at times, morally questionable.

It is in our logical inconsistency that our biological consistency is revealed.

I believe our specialty is being comprehensibly incomprehensible, rationally irrational, and prisoners of our own illusory freedom.

CHILDREN OF WELL-BEING

In the most developed and affluent societies of the world, we are witnessing an increasingly evident phenomenon: a psychological regression unfolding alongside rapid technological evolution. This paradox raises questions about how material progress might negatively influence our human and social development. Contemporary society seems to be heading toward a generalized flattening, where human potential is sacrificed in the name of entertainment and an ever-centralized ego. Affluence is undoubtedly a positive achievement for humanity, yet it can become a limitation when experienced without awareness. In wealthy societies, the constant availability of material and technological resources has created an environment where difficulties are avoided at all costs. This attitude leads to psychological stagnation: challenges, which have always been stimuli for growth and personal transformation, are systematically eliminated through entertainment or consumption.

Instant gratification, now a dominant element of our lives, replaces the pursuit of meaning and enduring values. This develops a mindset focused on the ephemeral, where the sense of community and belonging is supplanted by the cultivation of personal image. It is a cult of the self, where affluence becomes a constraint on existence.

As animals, humans possess extraordinary potential expressed through creativity, the ability to build relationships, and the search for meaning. However, these qualities require fertile conditions to emerge: time, dedication, effort, and a vision that transcends the present, reaching between the past and future. The dominance of consumer and entertainment culture denies these conditions.

Rather than serving as a springboard for greater human fulfillment, technological progress has, in many cases, made psychological confrontation with challenges more difficult. Without diverse obstacles to overcome, humanity risks losing the ability to think, solve problems, innovate, and create. The ease and accessibility that define contemporary affluence have dulled the drive for exploration and discovery, leading to a cultural, intellectual, and existential flattening.

From childhood, new generations grow up in an environment that prioritizes comfort and tranquility without teaching them the merit and value behind these states.

This context, though seemingly positive, often deprives young people of the ability to appreciate the work, effort, and resilience required to achieve meaningful goals, including the status they enjoy. The lack of sacrifice, even at an early age, prevents future adults from understanding the importance of contributing to and engaging in something larger than their immediate interests.

A child constantly praised for completing trivial tasks might grow up believing every action deserves recognition, regardless of effort or significance. Similarly, an overprotective parent who resolves every difficulty under the guise of helping inhibits the child from confronting frustration—a necessary element for learning, developing strategies for adversity, and finding inventive solutions.

In my view, a crucial part of the issue lies in parents' widespread misunderstanding of their role. Parenting is not primarily about loving and being loved; it is about preparing children to face life's challenges and ensuring their autonomy. Love, though essential, should not be the ultimate goal but rather a tool to support this purpose.

However, many parents fall into a psychological trap, becoming slaves to the desire for emotional reciprocation from their children.

This contrasts with the natural evolutionary order, which does not account for such stagnation. Of course, this does not mean children should lack gratitude. But it is not the child's responsibility to compensate for their parents' emotional shortcomings—nor the reverse. The parental bond should be based on mutual growth and preparing the child for an independent life, not on expectations of gratitude or emotional repayment.

We grow up believing that suffering is unnecessary, numbing pain with every means at our disposal and preventing our brains from learning how to process it. The result is a generation that struggles to find satisfaction in the process, focusing solely on the outcome without valuing the journey required to achieve it. There is no longer joy in effort, no happiness in hard work.

At the same time, the overstimulation created by constant entertainment reduces the space for more meaningful activities. Moments of silence, boredom, and introspection are essential for developing creativity and deep emotional connections, even with oneself; unfortunately, they are replaced by a constant stream of trivial stimuli.

Our lack of attention to self-reflection and the world around us diminishes our capacity to imagine new scenarios and limits our ability to appreciate the reality we live in.

Rediscovering the value of silence and boredom is essential—not as moments to be passively filled, but as spaces for thought.

The issue lies in the direction of our thoughts—too self-centered, too closed, too rigid.
Hungry for gossip, curious about others' egos to satisfy our own, and caught in a cult of personality we long to participate in.

Arrogantly, I believe that most people are using their potential, time, and energy in the most misguided way possible—all to avoid sacrificing their anesthetic comfort.

The ego, when viewed as a tool rather than a tyrannical master, can once again become an ally in the search for deeper meaning. It can help forge a life earned, deserved, lived, and enjoyed in all its nuances.

The path is not easy, but it is necessary. For the children of well-being to become children of being: individuals capable of transforming their potential into reality and finding meaning beyond the mirror.

THE SCREENWRITER WITHIN US

Our narrative self is the most influential weapon we can forge. This self, so convinced of its own story, has the power to shape our reality and skew it, often distorting it. The story we tell ourselves about who we are and our life overshadows objective reality to the point that we end up living more in our own version than in concrete facts. Our minds are so skilled at storytelling that it's often difficult to distinguish between objective reality and the idealized or distorted version we create. We find ourselves trapped in this personal narrative, which sometimes reassures us, sometimes condemns us, but always keeps us from seeing things as they really are.

Our narrative becomes a mental prison, a cage that keeps us safely within our comfort zone yet prevents us from growing, from questioning ourselves. It's our story that often takes control, rendering us blind to the complexity and diversity of objective reality. We tend to ignore anything that doesn't fit our story, rejecting everything that could contradict or challenge it. This resistance to change is often motivated by a fear of losing control or of facing aspects of ourselves we'd rather avoid.

This concept is closely tied to the level of narcissism within us, where the narrative self constructs a grandiose, self-celebratory story that constantly needs validation from the outside world. Narcissism, at its core, is just this: an exaggerated and rigid self-narrative that seeks affirmation in every interaction, avoiding any form of criticism.

Our inner narrative becomes more important than the truth, and every situation is filtered to fit the story we want to uphold. This mechanism is particularly dangerous as it feeds a vicious cycle: the more we tell ourselves we're special and deserving of admiration, the more we crave external proof to confirm it, and the more dependent we become on these validations.

In doing so, we end up building superficial relationships, based not on reality but on the need to fuel our own narrative. Every critique, every piece of feedback that doesn't align with our story is seen as a threat, and we respond with either defense or attack.

The narrative self becomes highly risky when it feeds only on external validation. Think, for example, of someone who tells themselves they're always the victim: every interaction is reinterpreted to reinforce this role, making it impossible to see their own responsibilities or view reality from a different perspective.

This kind of narrative creates a negative spiral in which every challenge is seen as further proof of one's victimhood, never acknowledging the personal power to change things.

Another example is someone who believes they're a genius, possessing a superior mind and destined for greatness: the fear of inferiority behind these people is immense.

Our narrative self is a powerful weapon, but that doesn't mean we can't learn to manage it. We must recognize that this inner voice is only one of many possible versions of ourselves, and that we can rewrite our story whenever we want (as long as we're consistent).

This requires an effort of awareness and the ability to accept that what we tell ourselves isn't always the truth but just a version. Being aware of this allows us to free ourselves from the tyranny of our narrative and get a little closer to the reality of things, with all its complexity and dynamism.

In this era, our narrative self has been heavily fueled by movies and social media. We're surrounded by stories and characters that inspire us, and the desire to feel part of a story has become a constant.
Social media, in particular, pushes us to construct an idealized version of ourselves, to feel like protagonists in a movie called life, thus fueling our personal narrative—and our narcissism. Everyone today wants to "tell their story."

Everyone wants to be the main character in their own story, which makes it even harder to distinguish between who we truly are (in the reality of things) and what we tell ourselves and others.

But the narrative self isn't the solution, and we don't necessarily have to see ourselves as protagonists in a story. This attitude can easily lead to selfish, egocentric, and indifferent behavior toward others and the consequences of our actions.
On the contrary, we should see ourselves as valuable parts of a larger mechanism called society, in which every individual is a resource of equal value.

We're not the only ones with a story: each of us has our own personal story, and all these stories are part of the "story of humanity," a universal book where the greatest deeds and revolutions are told.

Each of us contributes with our own subplots, and it's important to remember that, while everyone has their own role, we are all part of something bigger and shared: human evolution.

THE PRICE TO PAY

Every advantage comes with a price. Every good thing, every virtue, every fortune, every victory. Everything has a cost. Even what seems to have no price comes with the cost of its absence. You pay with time, with energy, with the choices you make and the ones you discard. The issue isn't the price itself, but the awareness of paying it.

There is a duality in everything around us. For every success, there is the weight of future expectations. For every freedom won, there is the responsibility to manage it. Even fortune, which seems to be freely given, ties us to a debt, because the fortunate must prove themselves worthy (or risk losing it).

Everything involves a choice, and each choice excludes all other possibilities.
Here lies the real cost: we lose possibilities without even realizing it.
To think you can gain something without sacrificing another is an illusion.
You can't have benefits without their costs, or fortunes without their flip side.

The value of everything is determined by the price we are willing to pay. Living means constantly negotiating that price, aware that everything has a cost. Even choosing not to pay has its own price.

Only those who understand this can walk tall, knowing they have paid the right price for what they've achieved.

There is a threshold, a limit beyond which the price becomes unbearable. But what happens when that threshold shifts? When, driven by ambition or desire, we agree to pay more than we ever imagined? At that point, the value of what we seek begins to fade, because the price outweighs the benefit.

Often, the true price is not paid upfront. We realize it only later, when we notice we've lost something essential along the way: serenity, relationships, our identity, and so on.
Yet, there are those who, in order to avoid loss, will pay any price, down to their last breath. They are the ones who never give up but live in constant tension, in an ongoing battle with themselves and the world. For them, paying the price is part of the game, a challenge to face without hesitation.

But does it make sense to keep paying at all costs?

Sometimes, wisdom lies in knowing when to stop paying, when to recognize that what you've gained is no longer worth the cost. It is an act of maturity, of awareness. Learning when to let go is one of the most difficult skills to master, because it allows us to protect what is most precious.

Serenity, for example, is a goal many aspire to, but how many are willing to pay the price of renunciation to achieve it? Mental tranquility often requires letting go of ambitions, the expectations of others, and even certain desires that, on the surface, seem to make us feel alive. The price of serenity is detachment: from control, from battles, from victories. And not everyone is ready to make this compromise, because living in a state of inner peace also means accepting a certain form of relinquishment.

The prodigy has the gift of genius, but at the price of madness. Capable of extraordinary creations, their mind is always on the verge of breaking under the weight of its own brilliance. This doesn't bring joy but rather a constant anxiety, and often it is others who enjoy the fruits of their genius, while they remain entangled in their own complexity.

But how much is genius really worth if it brings such suffering? Is it right to sacrifice personal happiness for the "greater good" of society, which will benefit from their inventions? The truth is, for many true geniuses, there is no choice. Their brain is programmed to create, to fulfill and carry out its brilliance, down to the last drop of blood.
Driven by an irresistible physical need for expression, they are forced to give shape and voice to what is born in their minds.

Ideas and feelings, too vast to be contained, demand to be released; if restrained, they threaten to overwhelm. They have no escape. They have no choice. Even if highly coveted, this is the price to pay for genius.

Artists create beauty that moves the world, yet they rarely find joy in their own works. Forever critical of themselves, always in search of that elusive "something," they are condemned to watch others truly enjoy what they've made. This leaves them with a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction.

The world admires the final result but rarely understands the inner journey that accompanies creation. The price of creativity is solitude and misunderstanding.

Even love, which seems to be the most noble and selfless of feelings, has its price.
Loving means exposing your vulnerability, accepting the risk of suffering, of loss, of being hurt. Love is never free, because it requires you to set aside your pride, accept compromises, and dedicate yourself to another person. The price of love is the sacrifice of a part of your ego.

Knowledge allows you to see the world through a different lens, uncovering truths hidden in the details that go unnoticed by others.

However, in this process, you lose the ability to marvel at the ordinary and enjoy the lightness of living without questioning too much.

The price of knowledge is the loss of innocence. Those who understand too much can no longer be surprised by what is simple and immediate. Their gaze is always beyond, beyond appearances, beyond the present moment, living in a constant state of reflection.
This pursuit of truth, while leading them to a deeper understanding, alienates them from the small daily joys and immediate emotions.

The price to pay for having something precious is its inevitable loss.

It could be a person, a bond, an object, or something else... but sooner or later, either through one's own death or the death of the counterpart—or worse, through a premature loss—it will be gone.

The price to pay for being born (and living) is accepting our death, realizing that nothing truly belongs to us. Not even we belong to ourselves. Not even the present, which is always slipping away. We live on a lease with terms and conditions unknown to us.

So tell me, what is the price you are willing to pay?

DEATH OF THE OTHER'S SELF

We've come to understand that our being is constantly, dynamically, and fluidly interchangeable. Who we are with one person may not be who we are with another. The synergy created with like-minded individuals (or groups) leads us to act differently than we normally would.

How many times do we find ourselves saying, "I feel like a different person around him," or, "She makes me feel alive," or, "With them, I rediscover a part of myself I had forgotten"? These examples reveal an important aspect: our self is deeply influenced by others. The person we connect with, in a sense, reflects a part of us, or rather, brings out a side of our being that wouldn't manifest without them.

Our identity is made up of pieces tied to others. We are never truly ourselves in the pure, immutable way we like to imagine. We depend on others for a part of who we are, but this doesn't make us weak, nor does it mean we are entirely dependent. We exist in the world through relationships, and we cannot separate ourselves from this condition.

However, as much as interacting with others influences who we are in the moment, there is a logical line of coherence that guides and preserves the integrity of our self. This coherence is not about always being the same version, but rather maintaining a core identity that allows us to navigate through different versions of ourselves without getting lost.

The risk of losing ourselves arises only when there is a break in the logical continuity between the individual self and the collective self. If the change is so drastic and frequent that it leaves no trace of who we were, then yes, there is a risk of dissolving our identity into fragments without direction.

The collective self, therefore, should not be seen as a threat to our authenticity, but rather as a temporary, enhanced reflection of who we are. Every relationship, every social context, adds or subtracts something, and that collective self exists alongside our individual self. It doesn't replace it, it doesn't erase it, but instead, it runs parallel to it, broadening our sense of who we are.

When someone leaves our life, that particular self that existed in relation to them may no longer manifest in our daily lives, but it isn't entirely lost. Memory, in fact, becomes a kind of emotional and psychological archive, where those versions of ourselves remain stored, even if they are no longer actively in use.

We can think of memory as a sort of "preservation zone" for the self, a place where fragments of our past continue to exist. These fragments no longer influence the present directly, but they can be recalled in moments of reflection, nostalgia, or simply through encountering something or someone that reminds us of that past. In a way, the self we've lost in a past relationship isn't dead, but archived, and its memory can still have relevance in our present.

For example: imagine walking down the street and running into someone you haven't seen since high school. Despite the years that have passed, during the interaction you might notice a strange feeling: without even realizing it, your attitude, tone of voice, maybe even your sense of humor or way of expressing yourself, seems to revert to how it was back then. It's as if, in that person's presence, a past version of your self, which only existed in relation to that specific context and relationship, reactivates.

This happens because your self during high school was partly shaped by your interactions with that person, the group dynamics, and the environment around you. When you meet that classmate again, even though you're a different person today, memory brings to the surface that old identity you had then—an identity tied to that relationship. It's an unconscious, almost automatic process, as if your mind is trying to reconnect with a familiar way of being in the presence of that individual.

This "temporary reactivation" might make you feel, even if just for a brief moment, like you've gone back in time. It's not a true regression, but rather a momentary recall of a past version of yourself that existed in that specific context.

This happens because memory isn't just a static archive; it's a mechanism that, in the presence of certain stimuli—in this case, someone from your past—can recall the self that was active during that period.

When the people who helped shape us are no longer around, the self that existed only in relation to them doesn't reappear in other relationships. It's gone with them, because it existed exclusively in that specific relationship.

Every fragment of us tied to a particular interaction or dynamic cannot survive on its own: it lives and fades along with those who brought it to life.

When we lose someone dear, we also lose a part of ourselves. The memories remain, but we can never replicate who we were with that person with another person.

THE RIGHT TO BE LOVED

Where is the love we were promised? The one told in fairy tales, described as a magical power capable of transforming everything? Where is that endless joy that parents wave before their children's eyes, or that story that should give meaning to our existence, like in the movies? The truth is, it doesn't exist. It never has.

There's a harsh reality that everyone must face sooner or later: there is no right to be loved as an adult. Children, yes, they have the right to be loved. Parents are obliged to love them; it's a kind of implicit contract at birth. But for adults, there's nothing written. No one is obliged to love another adult. Yet we live under this collective illusion that at some point, love is owed to us, that there exists some form of "right to be loved" that we will be granted.

Being loved is not a right but a stroke of luck. And when it happens, it's not because we deserve it or because it's owed to us, but simply because it happened. And if it does, we must be smart enough to recognize it and hold on tight because there's no guarantee in this reality.

We're swept away by the belief that at some point, love will arrive, as if it were a reward for surviving, for believing.

We like to think that love is spontaneous and selfless, but how many relationships are based on a tacit exchange of benefits? Attention, security, stability, social status. It's not a matter of cynicism… it's reality. Love is often treated like a transaction: I give you this, but only if you give me that. And if one of the two stops "giving," love falters, and the myth of "forever" crumbles.

Sometimes, love is merely narcissism in disguise. Many people seek love not to connect with the other person, but to feel complete, validated... not by their partner, but by their own ideal projection of themselves. We want someone who makes us feel special, desirable, necessary. And if that person stops feeding our ego, we're ready to discard them, searching for a new mirror.

The "true love" that's supposed to save us is a construct sold to us by movies, books, and even companies that know well how to exploit our hunger for emotions. They tell us that without that love, we are incomplete.

But maybe we're just consumers of a product that doesn't really exist. A bit like the happiness they promise in advertisements: always within reach, but never truly attainable. A marketing deception.

In the end, the pursuit of love might just be a way to escape the fear of being alone, of having to face our existence without an emotional anchor. We seek someone to fill that void, unaware that the void exists independently of the other. Love is not a cure; at best, it's a temporary palliative. The profound loneliness we carry cannot be eradicated by anyone.

There's this deeply ingrained belief that love automatically brings happiness, but how many people do we know who are in love yet still unhappy, frustrated, or even destroyed? Love can become a cage, a poison that, if poorly handled, leads us to sacrifice our identity, our freedom.

Maybe the real problem isn't finding love, but understanding whether we're truly ready to accept it for what it is: imperfect, unpredictable, and far from the idealizations we grew up with.

Love isn't here to save us or to give us what we think we're missing. In the end, it's merely a mirror of our limits and vulnerabilities.

And the real challenge is not desperately seeking it, but having the courage to live without it, accepting that love, like happiness, is not a guaranteed destination, but a luxury that, if it comes, should be seen for what it is: a rare gift, not a right.

But then, why is it that no one teaches us that falling in love and love are two completely different stages? Psychologically, falling in love is that initial rush that triggers a storm of hormones and emotions, complete with idealization (seeing the other person as perfect, magical, the center of your universe).

But that phase, as thrilling and intense as it may be, is bound to end. And when it does, many people think that love is over. But that's exactly when it begins.
Love is what comes after infatuation, when the hormones settle down, and you have to face the reality of an imperfect person standing before you.

Psychologists like Erich Fromm already understood this: *"the confusion arises from the initial experience of 'falling in love,' which is mistakenly confused with the permanent state of 'being in love.'"*

So, you can love someone without being in love with them anymore, and vice versa, you can fall in love with someone without actually being capable of loving them.

As Immanuel Casto said: *"often, films and fairy tales tell stories of grand infatuations that end before love even begins."*

We fall in love all the time, but we rarely ever truly love. Society sells us infatuation as if it were the permanent phase of love. We are told that if you no longer feel that initial passion, then the relationship is over, or it's wrong.

But the raw and honest truth is that falling in love is just the prelude. Love, on the other hand, requires sacrifice, effort, and a heavy dose of realism. And that's why so few people reach it: it's too uncomfortable, too far from the romantic narrative we've been sold since we were children.

We're in the midst of a global affection crisis. Love, like a currency in constant circulation, has lost its intrinsic value. In an era of infinite choices, where you can have everything immediately, human beings act with greed, grabbing everything they can without stopping to reflect on the real value of what's in their hands. The result? Emotional inflation, where love becomes something we consume rather than feel.

We live in a time where real well-being is taken for granted, so what's left to do but speculate on everything that still seems precious? We speculate on freedom, on love, even on happiness and sadness because everything must become a commodity, an object of desire. Instead of recognizing the true value of things, we use them to fuel a never-ending dissatisfaction.

Humans, incapable of satiating their desires, keep pushing further, often without realizing it. They want everything, they want more, because the constant desire to experience something different has become the norm.

Stability, balance, they're too boring for our emotional system, now unaccustomed to consistency. So, what do we do? We welcome serenity only with the knowledge that, sooner or later, something new and different will come along to disrupt it.

We like variables, we like the unexpected because in an era of material security, it's the surprise that keeps us alive. We no longer know what it means to nurture a deep and lasting feeling; what intrigues us is the thrill of change, the adrenaline that only uncertainty can provide.

The hard, cold truth is that we're no longer capable of maintaining a stable bond, because our emotional system has become addicted to the unexpected, to that excitement that reminds us we're still capable of feeling something intense, even if only for a fleeting moment.

And so, instead of cultivating depth, we prefer to collect fragments, jumping from one variable to another because true consistency, the kind that lasts, terrifies us.

SOCIAL MASKS

What are they, you might ask?
They're nothing more than the roles we find ourselves playing in society, in certain contexts. Roles that, despite everything, we don't really choose. Or, if we do, we only choose them partially.

These masks begin to form from birth. Our parents, school, relationships, work— all these influences shape us, imposing expectations and triggering a mechanism of adaptation. We wear these masks because society demands it.
And society isn't some evil or unknown entity... It's us. We are society. We make these rules.

Socialization is the process through which we learn, on a relational level, what is "right" and what is "wrong," pushing us to adopt a personality that facilitates interaction with others.
As we grow up, how many times have you worn a mask to fit into a group, at work, or simply to avoid conflicts in relationships?

How many times have you found yourself smiling, making conversation, even when you weren't in the mood? That's a social mask: a role we feel obliged to play to maintain harmony. Or think about when you're with different groups of friends. You might feel different depending on the group you're with. With some friends, you're the funny one; with others, you might be the reflective one, or even the more serious one.

Think about the early months of a relationship, where you only show your best side, wearing the mask of the “perfect partner.” Or at work, as the “model employee,” or when others attribute characteristics to you that aren’t yours, but which you start to adopt for social strategy.
There are many daily dynamics, from the most obvious to the most hidden.

In popular culture, the concept of a “mask” often has a negative connotation. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

Sometimes, masks aren’t falsehoods or deceptions, but integral parts of human existence. They are tools. Tools through which individuals communicate, protect themselves, and adapt to the social context in which they live. Without those masks, our interaction with the world would be far more complicated.

However, we don’t always like the social role we have to play. We don’t always like the masks others stick on us with arrogance and presumption. We don’t always manage to express who we really are. How many times have you been told, "You’re not like that," or "You’re a different person," leaving you wondering, "Am I really?"

What others see doesn’t always match who we are. And this can create discomfort. Frustration. Because something feels off. After all, appearance is not the same as essence.

This conflict between the various "selves" we perceive is what makes everything so complex.
Because we constantly live between multiple versions of ourselves. The "self" we perceive inside, the "self" that others attribute to us, and the "self" we want to be. And finding a balance between these selves is anything but easy.

It's clear that there's no immutable "self". Personality isn't something fixed, it's not a pre-carved statue. On the contrary, personality is constantly changing, it's fluid, adapting and shifting based on the context. Every social interaction transforms us. Every new experience changes the way we see ourselves, and the way others see us.

So I'll end this brief reflection with a similarly reflective question:

At this moment, who are you? Are you who you think you are? Are you, to others, what you are to yourself? Or are you who others believe you to be?

LOSE TO WIN

When I talk about "losing to win," I'm not just saying that we need to make mistakes in order to succeed. Rather, I want to highlight that the value of our achievements becomes greater when we've faced challenges and difficulties along the way.

It's a bit like appreciating a sunny day more after a week of relentless rain.
This concept teaches us that the sweetest victories are those that come after navigating through complex situations, not the ones obtained effortlessly. It's like finally solving a complicated puzzle after hours of trying: the sense of satisfaction is immense precisely because you had to work hard to get there.

In this sense, "winning" doesn't simply mean getting what you want, but deeply appreciating the result because of the obstacles you've overcome to reach it. The challenges and limitations along the way teach us to be creative, resilient, and passionate. And when we finally reach our goal, the success tastes much richer... unique.

It's not about avoiding defeat at all costs, but about embracing the journey, with all its ups and downs, to fully appreciate the meaning of a hard-earned victory.

Because perhaps, the most important victory of our life might come at the cost of a thousand defeats.

PERCEPTION OF ETHICS

What is right or wrong? What is good or bad? Can there be a "right good" and a "wrong good"? Can there be a "right evil" and a "wrong evil"?
Do you know what changes in all these assumptions? The perspective.
Depending on where we stand in relation to the dilemma at hand, we make judgments influenced by our biases. The wisest among us try to separate this fragile aspect of human nature, but in my opinion, it's almost impossible.

Is it ethical for the lion to eat the gazelle to survive? No, but it is **necessary**.
This very basic, primal concept is extremely important because we are born into a reality governed by a clear rule of Nature:
"Mors tua, Vita mea" (Your death, my life), No living being can escape this.

Quoting and reshaping Nietzsche's concept:
"The value of a person is measured by the amount of truth they can bear."

We must accept the fact that by existing, directly or indirectly, we participate in the "your death, my life" game. Because even in the professional world: "My success is your failure";
"my victory is your defeat." and "my gain is your loss."

Human beings tend to perceive as dangerous or as enemies what they do not know—a phenomenon rooted in our evolutionary background, where the unknown often represented a threat to survival.

Think of the antagonist characters in TV series or films: when their stories and motivations are revealed, they often begin to evoke empathy in the eyes of the viewer, who had previously misjudged them.
And perhaps, even though the antagonist carries out completely unethical actions, the viewer empathizes, identifying with and justifying the character simply because of the understanding and knowledge of their story.
You can observe that, even in the smallest things, the distinction between 'good' and 'evil' becomes much less clear.

This same process happens in real life: prejudice against those who are different or unfamiliar diminishes as we get to know the other person better. The more we understand, the less we fear.

A very common example is stealing out of necessity. Stealing is universally considered wrong, yet there are situations where a desperate person steals food to feed themselves or their family. In this case, for the thief, the wrongness of theft may seem justified or even necessary, turning into a 'justifiable wrong' in the eyes of someone who must survive.

Our true nature emerges in moments of crisis, when we are forced to defend what we love. In these moments, we are willing to do anything. Ethics disappear. The same applies in extreme survival cases. The common factor that leads humans to disregard moral rules is extremity.

This is why, as a society, we should do everything possible to prevent extreme situations in any field. Only by doing so can we maintain balance. Only in this way can we respect the parameters we have established for our coexistence.

So, are you really sure you hate? Are you sure of your judgment? Or do you simply not know enough yet?

GENUINE SIMULATION

When AI-robots begin replicating the same emotional, behavioral, and logical patterns as humans, we will have to acknowledge the existence of a new being.

What will happen to the human race when it faces, for the first time, a being that is more intelligent and creative in every way? Are we perhaps creating our own battlefield for survival? Because if that is the case, then current economic systems will collapse, and so will our ability to coexist and survive.

Humanoid robots will have a significant competitive advantage in future relationships: compliance. They will be able to meet physical and emotional needs of all kinds, unrequited ideals that can finally become reality. Will humans then prefer to interact with robots? Will we go extinct?

The point is: what are we demanding from others? If the answer is 'compliance,' the 'perfect match,' then yes, we will go extinct. If the answer is, 'wow... I really don't know,' then maybe we still have some hope. But we need to figure it out quickly.

But when is behavior simulated or genuine?

The difference lies in the fact that our behaviors are innate and dynamically fluid, evolving over the course of our lifetime. No one has preset or established them. While androids with AGI may simulate complex emotions and behaviors, these result from pre-programmed algorithms and defined updates.

Our behaviors emerge from a complex chemical interaction between genetics, personal experiences, and environmental influences, creating a unique and unrepeatable interaction. This uniqueness, combined with our continuous adaptability and personal growth, fundamentally sets us apart from artificial systems, which, no matter how advanced, remain tied to programming parameters.

Intelligence, sentience, consciousness, and personality are intrinsically linked to the complex organicity of our bodies. We are not alive only in the brain; our vitality is spread across billions of organisms and cells that make up our body, all interconnected and coordinated by the command center—the brain. This intricate and living network means that creating just a brain isn't enough to make it 'alive': an entity must be integrated and coherent in all its biological parts.

The brain, while being the center of our cognitive activities and consciousness, does not operate in isolation. Every piece of DNA in every cell contributes to our identity and functionality.

The interactions between cells, the chemical and electrical signals traveling throughout our body, and the internal and external environments in which we live, create a dynamic and synergistic system that goes beyond the mere sum of its parts.

What we will do with robots will be a process of simulating our functions, so effectively that it becomes imperceptible to us. Only in this (philosophical, not logical) case can we begin to question the difference, in our perception, between simulation and genuineness in these future androids.

How much are we willing to simulate genuineness to make it enjoyable? How much are we willing to accept the false as true? But most importantly, will we then be able to distinguish between the two? When the trick is revealed, does it lose its charm? Time will tell.

But let's consider the possible existence of a God (or multiple gods). In that case, would we also be 'mere' simulations, resulting from conditions and parameters programmed by a higher entity? The idea of the non-existence of God might reassure us about our authenticity, as it would confirm that our behaviors are not the result of divine calculations. The presence of a God would suggest that we are all the product of an unquantifiable algorithm, while His absence would guarantee our genuine originality. It's curious to think that the denial of a deity could offer comfort regarding one's originality.
Quite the paradox, isn't it?

SOCIAL EVALUATION

We live in a world where the value of something is determined by its exclusivity. Only a privileged few can enjoy exclusive goods, leaving the majority dissatisfied. This system creates a disparity that keeps only a minority content, while the majority continues chasing after what they cannot have.

Social validation plays a crucial role: we tend to value what others consider valuable. If many people attribute value to a "person x" or "object y," we are inclined to believe they possess inherent worth. This phenomenon enhances the illusion of value, driving us to desire what others cherish, in an attempt to feel part of the group. Pillars of our economic system, like the stock market, thrive on this kind of speculation.

In our society, **everything is inflated**, including personal values. The price of our life and principles is often reduced to mere pennies, ready to be sold not to the highest bidder, but to the first one who captures our attention. This system is fueled by the approval of others, which capitalism exploits. We achieve goals not for personal satisfaction, but to feel validated by those around us.

To avoid being crushed by desires that are as dazzling as they are fleeting, we must detach ourselves from this system of external confirmation. Only then can we live authentically.

Social recognition is a fundamental, positive aspect of human nature, deeply rooted in our origins as a social species. Since the earliest prehistoric communities, humans have sought the approval and recognition of others to ensure their survival and prosperity. However, over time, the system of social validation has undergone transformations that have made it potentially toxic.

In early human societies, social recognition was crucial for survival. Being accepted and valued by the group meant having access to resources, protection, and mutual support. Individuals who managed to gain their group's approval were more likely to survive and reproduce.

The dynamics of social recognition once promoted group cohesion, collaboration, and resource sharing. Hierarchy and status played an important role. Individuals who demonstrated particular skills, such as hunting, gathering, or wisdom, were recognized and respected, often taking on leadership roles. This recognition not only bolstered their standing within the group but also benefited the entire community through effective guidance and wise decisions.

In modern times, however, **tangible contributions to the community have given way to the perception of 'success' and popularity**.

Social recognition is increasingly based on superficial metrics, whoever entertains the most wins, no matter how. The number of interactions on social media has become a marker of personal value. People are incentivized to craft an idealized and often unrealistic image of themselves to gain approval. This leads to a constant search for external validation, which is often fleeting and shallow.

This has created a system where popularity is seen as synonymous with value, regardless of the actual positive impact an individual might have.

Another aspect of **modern social validation is material prestige**. The ownership of luxury goods, the attainment of high economic status, and the ability to flaunt wealth have become symbols of success. This drives people to measure their self-esteem and the worth of others in terms of material possessions, rather than through meaningful contributions or personal qualities.
This is why it's important to step back from these toxic modern values. This doesn't mean isolating oneself, but rather recalibrating.

The human social ego has not evolved enough to handle these dynamics on a large scale, and it suffers deeply as a result. (In fact, this might be the most glaring and widespread psychological issue we've ever seen.)

People can become so focused on seeking external approval that they lose sight of what truly matters for their well-being. This can lead to a life dominated by appearances rather than substance, resulting in existential emptiness and a loss of authentic identity.

We must find the right balance of social recognition based on the substance of one's being (authenticity, integrity, ethics, resilience), and on contributions to the community (innovation, collaboration, support, etc.). We will all benefit from it.

AMBITIOUS SOCIETY

An ambitious society works, but a society full of ambitious individuals does not, and this is a harsh reality to accept.
Some of these ambitions are automatically repressed by the social and economic systems. The concepts of "mors tua vita mea" (your death, my life) and "if there's a winner, there's a loser" prevail—and it may be even worse. In today's world, a single winner often tramples many losers, not just one.

This mechanism can significantly compromise the overall level of individual satisfaction. **Does adjusting our ambitions damage the ego?** Doesn't it make everything seem less magical? Limiting our ambitions can indeed suppress willpower, with negative emotional repercussions.

Who is happier: the balanced individual who keeps their desires in check at the expense of full personal freedom, or the uncontrollable dreamer who fulfills their ambitions at the expense of others' freedom?

There is no right or wrong answer. Simply: "it is what it is." Awareness may soften this cost we pay for coexistence. Yet, there will always be those who evade this "social tax." There will always be individuals who pursue their ambitions without restraint, at the expense of others.

The greatest paradox is that some of these ambitious individuals manage to elevate themselves to the status of gurus, mocking the community while preaching anarchy and indifference towards others, and even managing to gain a following. To me, this phenomenon is nothing short of embarrassing, revealing a shockingly low level of critical and constructive thought among the masses.
Perhaps this is a consequence of the suppression of ambition and the ideal identities of the masses. The constant defeats in the pursuit of self-realization, the unhealthy competitions that today's economic systems offer, have left people vulnerable. When individuals are stripped of their ambitions, they become susceptible—and there are those who seize the opportunity by selling them a ready-made, comforting identity.

The "selling of identities" works precisely because many people choose to numb themselves to avoid suffering. It's a sad choice, but far more common than we might think.

When personal fulfillment is out of reach, the system offers identity-based comforts in many forms, making coexistence possible. Religion provides an identity based on spiritual and moral beliefs, offering a sense of belonging and meaning through rituals and traditions. The job market pushes people to identify with their professional roles, defining their personal worth through career success. Politics creates a sense of belonging through ideologies and parties, often generating division and polarization, reinforcing identity. Nationalism promotes an identity rooted in national pride, strengthened by shared symbols and collective histories.

Consumerism defines personal identity through material goods and lifestyles, encouraging the valuing of branded and luxury products. Conspiracy theories offer an identity based on the belief in knowing hidden truths, creating a sense of intellectual superiority and belonging to an exclusive group. Social movements provide identity through the fight for specific causes, such as civil rights or environmentalism, offering purpose and community.

Urban subcultures offer identities based on shared interests like music and fashion, fostering a sense of belonging among members. The fitness culture promotes an identity centered on physical appearance and health, defining individuals through their workout routines and diets, and so on…

Each of these entities offers its own packaged identity. It almost seems like **there's no need to struggle to find your own identity in the world**, as the system already offers it all.

"Why bother creating some wild, challenging ambition to pursue? Just take advantage of the comfortable and safe, prepackaged choices we've made for you—be mediocre and be happy."

That's how I imagine the sales pitch.
I use the term 'System' not with a conspiratorial connotation, but in a technical (personal) sense, to define the interconnected network of individuals, institutions, and economic and social subsystems. This System is not controlled by anyone; it is in constant dynamism and evolution. Simply put, it represents the overall functioning and integration of various societies across the globe—the vast mechanism that encompasses all the dynamics present on planet Earth, of which we are all a part.

But this isn't necessarily strange or wrong. It's the possible order we've found. However, we often forget that each of us has sacrificed (or is still sacrificing) a part of our ambitions for the sake of coexistence.

INNER VALUES

The value we assign to the external world is a reflection of our inner principles. When we diminish these principles, our perception of reality subtly but profoundly shifts. What once brought us joy or satisfaction loses its power because the very source of that value—our inner integrity—has been compromised.

If we devalue ourselves in pursuit of external riches or success, we find that the taste of those achievements will never be the same. Our ability to appreciate is intertwined with our inner principles: when those weaken, the world around us also loses its color and meaning.

Exchanging our integrity for external gains is a deceptive bargain, as the cost is not only the loss of what we hold within but also our ability to recognize and enjoy what we attain. When we undervalue ourselves, everything around us suffers the same fate. It's a simple equation:
if you devalue the inside, you devalue the outside too. The experiences and milestones that once fulfilled us suddenly feel hollow, leaving us with a sense of nostalgia for who we were and how we used to see the world. Instead of feeling complete and accomplished, we risk finding ourselves dissatisfied and frustrated, trapped in a life that has lost its flavor.

The **sweetness of victories** is no longer the same. It's like reaching the summit of a mountain only to discover that the view no longer takes your breath away. If we lose sight of who we are, we risk dulling everything that once shined brightly in our lives.

This isn't about superficial moralizing, but a simple truth: our perception of reality is shaped by the values we hold within. It's hard to repair such devaluations. Throughout life, there will be pivotal decisions from which there is no return, as they shape both the external world and our inner selves.

Conventional wisdom teaches us that there's always redemption and always ways to make amends, but that's not entirely true. Some choices change us forever, and it's important to pay careful attention to what we decide.
There is no going back, and not everything can be undone.

DESIRE

Dopamine plays a crucial role in the brain's reward system, driving behaviors that lead to pleasure or gratification. When we perceive a stimulus that might fulfill a need or desire, dopamine levels increase, creating a sense of anticipation and motivation. This explains why simply formulating desires and imagining them repeatedly can have a significant impact on our psyche.

From an evolutionary perspective, desire has been fundamental to survival and reproduction. Craving food, water, shelter, and companionship helped humans meet basic needs and ensure the continuation of the species. Over time, these desires evolved, becoming more complex and encompassing social, cultural, and personal aspirations.

The anatomy of desire consists of three main components: motivation, intention, and action. Motivation is the initial drive, intention is the goal we aim to achieve, and action is the behavior we take to fulfill the desire. It becomes clear that "realistic" and genuine desires are those where we can identify and enact these three foundations.

On the other hand, more fantastical desires can be emotionally damaging, as they often fail at the third foundation—action—leading to frustration when the individual cannot act on their intent.

Managing desire is essential for overall well-being. This can be achieved through self-awareness and emotional regulation.

How?
By engaging in critical reflection: distinguishing between authentic and externally influenced desires, and between harmless and harmful ones (like addiction or self-destructive behaviors). This process allows for a more balanced and fulfilling life.

How Are Desires Planted?

1. **Targeting motivation**: Highlighting a gap or void in someone's life (such as well-being, security, or success), creating an emotional connection, and sparking curiosity by showing what's missing.

2. **Defining intention**: Encouraging the visualization of the outcome, allowing the person to imagine the benefits of achieving the desire. This often includes emphasizing the social acceptance tied to it, by creating a perception that many others share the same desire, leading to a real chain reaction.

3. **Encouraging action**: Offering immediate incentives (e.g., discounts, free trials) while minimizing barriers like cost, complexity, or time.

The issue with induced desires is that they don't align with your true values or needs. As a result, they create an illusory and fleeting cycle of expectation and reward. Where you anticipated joy, you find emptiness. Where you expected well-being, you encounter crisis.

The economic system separates us from barbarism by allowing us to fulfill needs and desires in an organized, civil manner. However, the balance that keeps most people playing along is delicate. Rising inequality and social injustice, driven by the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, creates frustration and tensions that threaten civil harmony.
Perhaps it's not simply a matter of well-being but of desires. Our desires grow endlessly, fueled by capitalism—and with them, our increasing "need" for money.

Marketing is the art of planting desires in people's minds, transforming consumer psychology into a form of ongoing "education." This education doesn't just suggest what is desirable; it actively shapes the very concept of success, happiness, and freedom.

Young people, in particular, are prime targets for this manipulation. Their still-developing minds are malleable, and they have many years ahead, making the investment in their conditioning especially profitable—an influence that can last for decades.

From a sociological standpoint, this dynamic creates a cycle of induced aspirations that never ends. Young people are persuaded that achieving certain status symbols is not only desirable but essential for their personal fulfillment. Luxury, success, and satisfaction become externally imposed definitions, goals to pursue relentlessly, often at the expense of true self-realization.

This process has profound implications. Artificially created desires become an integral part of individuals' identity structure, leading to a chronic sense of dissatisfaction. Happiness is continuously projected into the future, tied to the acquisition of a new object or a new consumer experience—never present in the current moment. If this illusion goes unrecognized, people may spend their entire lives chasing an idea of happiness built on unstable and artificial foundations.
In the most tragic cases, individuals may spend their entire lives working, sacrificing time, energy, and creative potential to achieve goals that were never truly their own, but imposed by an external system that convinced them of their necessity.

The global marketing system traps individuals in an endless cycle of unfulfilled desires, turning them into slaves of a dream that, by its very nature, is never meant to be realized.
It is no longer demand meeting supply but rather supply forcing the creation of demand.

Over time, desire has met envy, creating a potentially destructive outcome for humanity: greed.
It triggers a countdown for our mental health (if unmet). We crave and envy the privileges of others, and this could lead us to take actions inconsistent with who we once were.

When did we start measuring our happiness through privileges? It's a dangerous practice to assess our happiness based on the presence or absence of privileges. This superficial calibration of emotional and sentimental states in relation to privileges can lead to deep dissatisfaction and a failure to understand oneself, culminating in a sense of inner emptiness.
To truly understand our desires, we must dig down to their core, exploring the underlying motivations. For example:

- ***I want an expensive car.*** *Why? Not just for admiration, but because I believe it's the only way to be respected and noticed. But why do I need this level of respect? Because without it, I feel invisible and powerless.*

- ***I want to be famous.*** *Why? Not just for the attention, but because I believe that without the adoration of the masses, I am insignificant. Why do I crave this adoration? Because I equate fame with worthiness.*

- ***I want to always appear extremely well-dressed in designer clothes and fashionable accessories.*** *Why? Not just to look good, but because I believe that without projecting an image of luxury and style, I will be seen as inferior or unworthy of attention. Why do I need this external image? Because I equate my self-worth with how others perceive my appearance.*

- ***I want to travel constantly.*** *Why? Not just for the adventure, but because I believe that only constant novelty and escapism can keep me from confronting my inner turmoil. Why do I need to escape? Because my life feels meaningless without the stimulation of new experiences.*

- ***I want a big luxury house.*** *Why? Not just to symbolize success, but because I believe that without a grand display of wealth, I have no value. Why do I seek this validation? Because I measure my worth by how much more I have than others.*

- ***I want to be obsessively the best in my field.*** *Why? Not for the love of the work, but because I believe that only by being the absolute best can I prove my worth. Why do I need to be the best? Because anything less feels like failure.*

- ***I want to be in extremely perfect shape.*** *Why? Not for health, but because I believe that physical perfection is the only way to be loved and accepted. Why do I need to be loved in this way? Because I fear that without the ideal body, I will be rejected and unworthy.*

- ***I want continually to accumulate wealth.*** *Why? Not just for financial security, but because I believe that without constantly increasing my wealth, I am vulnerable and powerless. Why do I feel this vulnerability? Because I fear that without control over financial resources, I will lose control over my life.*

- ***I want to be constantly productive.*** *Why? Not just for achievement, but because I equate my personal value with how much I can accomplish. Why do I need to achieve so much? Because I fear that if I slow down, I'll be seen as lazy or unimportant.*

- ***I want to be always in a relationship.*** *Why? Not just for companionship, but because I believe that without a partner, I am incomplete and unworthy of love. Why do I feel incomplete? Because I fear loneliness and the societal judgment of being alone.*

- ***I want to be constantly entertained.*** *Why? Not just for fun, but because I believe that without constant stimulation, life is unbearable. Why do I need this stimulation? Because I cannot tolerate silence or stillness, as it forces me to confront uncomfortable emotions or existential questions.*

- ***I want to be emotionally invulnerable.*** *Why? Not just to protect myself from harm, but because I fear being seen as weak or too sensitive.*

- ***I want to control every aspect of my life.*** *Why? Not just for stability, but because I fear that if I let go of control, everything will fall apart. Why do I feel this fear? Because uncertainty and vulnerability terrify me, and I associate control with safety.*

- ***I want to constantly acquire new knowledge.*** *Why? Not just for self-improvement, but because I fear being seen as ignorant or unworthy.*

It's normal to have lighter, more balanced versions of these desires—wanting success, recognition, or comfort is part of the human experience. However, when these desires become extreme or obsessive, they often stem from flawed thought patterns, where self-worth and happiness are falsely tied to external achievements or approval.

To avoid falling into existential oblivion, we must first uncover the real motivations behind our desires. Otherwise, we risk chasing a dream that, like a soap bubble, looks bright and perfect but bursts the moment we touch it.
The truth is that all these forces—both constructive and destructive—serve a purpose for humans, but in survival, not in coexistence.

Pay attention to what you desire, but even more so to how and why you desire it. Every time you long for something, your brain, through its reward system, sets up an expectation of fulfillment. If you are unable to constantly meet these expectations (made by yourself), it creates a lingering sense of dissatisfaction. This feeling of unfulfillment doesn't just disappear; it festers and grows, gnawing at your well-being, draining you emotionally and mentally. Over time, this cycle can consume you entirely, like a slow bleed that saps your energy, focus, and joy.

Desires, when left unchecked, can become insatiable. The problem is not the act of desiring itself—desire is natural—but the relentless expectation that every want must be satisfied. When we become fixated on fulfilling these desires, we set ourselves up for disappointment, because life often doesn't provide instant gratification. The brain's reward system constantly seeks the next fix, pushing you into a loop of craving and frustration.

This dynamic can lead to a perpetual state of longing, where satisfaction is always just out of reach. Instead of appreciating what you have, you are consumed by what you lack. The more you feed this cycle, the deeper the dissatisfaction becomes, eventually eroding your peace of mind and happiness. It's crucial to understand that not every desire needs to be fulfilled, and chasing after every impulse can leave you depleted, both physically and emotionally.

At first glance, it seems like a recipe for unhappiness (and Freud surely wouldn't like this idea), but the wise know how much the long term is better than the short term.

CONDITIONS OF EXISTENCE

Have you ever set conditions for your own existence?

It was around my second year of high school when I first came across the concept of "conditions of existence" during a math lesson. In mathematics, a condition of existence is a rule that tells us when an expression or operation makes sense and can be calculated. It helps avoid impossible results, like dividing by zero or finding the square root of a negative number (within the realm of real numbers). For example, in the expression 1 over x-2, x must not equal 2, as that would lead to division by zero—an undefined or impossible result.

A light bulb moment. Just seconds after learning this strange idea, some neural path sparked, suggesting that I, too, had been doing the same thing with my life. I was speechless. I was stunned that a mathematical concept (from a subject I typically disliked) had opened my eyes to my own philosophy of life.

Because I, too, have always imposed conditions on my existence: "If I lose one of my five senses, I don't want to keep living"; "If I get cancer, I don't want to endure the pain of chemotherapy"; "If I lose a limb or a cognitive ability, I don't want to live." And so on.

Setting conditions for existence is a serious matter, one that requires thoughtful reflection and wisdom.

Over the course of my young life, I had the misfortune of encountering an "undefined expression." One of the conditions of existence I had set was no longer met; it was no longer respected.

"And now?" I asked myself.

I spent a long time reflecting on what "living" truly meant to me. Just as in math, where the condition of existence defines when an expression is valid, my own parameters had resulted in my life expression becoming "invalid." Each of us needs certain fundamental elements to live and thrive: relationships, purpose, physical and mental well-being, and so on.
Without these elements, life can seem "undefined" or "impossible," much like a math problem that cannot be solved.

"So, what do you do when you reach that point?"

Good question… because the type of answer you give will determine your fate.
Digging deeper, I started to sense something: perhaps the very concept of "condition of existence" needed rethinking. In mathematics, if something is undefined, it just means it cannot be calculated by standard rules; that doesn't erase the rest of the expression.

I realized that I had always been the one rigidly defining what made my existence "valid," as though living were a mathematical expression to be solved by strict, unchanging criteria. It was as if I had decided that certain experiences or abilities were the essential numbers giving me value, and that without them, everything would reduce to zero. But life, unlike math, doesn't operate on such rigid schemes.

Was it really necessary to define my entire existence based on those conditions? Couldn't I choose to live even if not all of them were fulfilled? So, I took it a step further and asked myself what would remain, beyond those conditions. What if I were willing to let go of that image of a perfect life?
What's the point of a life that's only a sum of conditions? Maybe living means embracing even what feels unbearable, letting it become part of our story—the defining part.

This discovery took time, and I admit that even today, I sometimes fall back into those old patterns. But now, whenever I feel the pull of "conditions of existence," I remember that just as in math we can solve a complex problem by bypassing what's undefined (through domain exclusions, simplifications, or limits), I, too, can choose to live my life without stopping at what seems impossible. I can move forward, knowing that not all parts of my existence will always have a solution. And that's okay.

Sometimes, we need to accept rewriting our conditions of existence, redefining what we consider "valid" so we can keep moving forward.

THE MATCH OF HUMANITY

Even today, I find myself writing at 2 a.m. By now, I can statistically confirm that my brain finds the most inspiration during this time slot. But I'm not complaining—on the contrary, I'm in a great mood. A dark room with a single dim light, computer, desk, relaxing lo-fi music, and rain outside. What more could one ask for?

Anyway, let me get to my reflection. I just finished watching Google DeepMind's documentary on AlphaGo—an absolutely fascinating story about how DeepMind's AI defeated the undisputed world champion of Go, Lee Sedol.

What can I say… I found myself surprisingly emotional. I didn't expect to empathize so much with Sedol, who, in this case, represented the entire human race against AI mechanisms.
"I want to apologize for being so powerless." That's what he said during the press conference after his defeat… and it hit me hard. Is this how we will feel too? **Powerless?**

Guys, maybe we haven't fully grasped it yet: we were raised to believe we are the most intelligent beings. But with the arrival of AGI, we won't be anymore. Not in logic, not in creativity, and certainly not in emotional intelligence—an ability we have long (and mistakenly) considered uniquely human.
In no domain will we be the best anymore.
Our capabilities will be surpassed in everything.

Many Go players, after being defeated by AlphaGo, felt stripped of their identity. A set of precise mechanisms managed to outperform them, despite not being a living entity. And what about the years they spent training? The pride they took in their abilities?

For years, they had built their entire existence around a game, only to discover that a machine could do it better.
Reality hit them like a slap in the face: everything is replicable, and not only that—it can be done in an **excellently superior** way.

Moves that seemed irrational led AlphaGo to rewrite the strategic rules of the game—moves no human would have ever dared to make. It lured its opponents into traps they didn't anticipate, only to reap the rewards of its actions a few turns later, ultimately defeating them.

Sure, all of this has always been invented by humans, but not by all humans. A few brilliant minds came together and created something even superior. If there was already a gap between "genius" and the average person, now that gap will grow even more, because **compared to these systems, genius becomes the norm. It becomes the standard.**

We have now set a new standard necessary for humanity. If we still want to abide by the rules of evolution and natural selection, we must raise our standards, we must improve ourselves, and we must do it quickly. **Because these systems have turned genius into the new baseline.**

But have we really processed what this means? Are we ready to see that fragile human magic—an illusion that has made us feel special for centuries—dissolve before our eyes? Yes, the human species is extraordinary, but that does not mean that every individual is. And this disparity will become increasingly evident. The gap between the elite and the rest of the population will become **immense**. The **top 1% will advance, while the remaining 99% will be left behind.**

When this reality becomes even more widespread, I believe the general reaction of the population will be: **frustration.**
Frustration in art, in thinking, in relationships, in work, in sports, and even in entertainment. Because whatever we are capable of doing, **AI will do it better, faster, and with less effort.**

But let's be clear: I am not saying that I dislike the technological future we are heading towards. On the contrary, as a **technophile, I find it thrilling**. I am speaking out of concern for those who do not embrace technology, who do not understand it, who are uneducated in it… those who are **competitively obsolete**. In my opinion, in the next century, **70% of the world's population will be obsolete.** Humans will no longer need other humans. The majority of people will no longer be able to contribute meaningfully to the workforce or society. **This will cause serious social imbalances.**
Universal Basic Income (UBI) **will not be enough.**

****Text Interruption****
At this point in my writing, my mind suddenly generated a thought that sent chills down my spine:
"We will no longer need other human beings—at least not in the way we have always considered them."
I literally do not understand the full meaning of this myself. I don't know if this was processed in a positive or negative way. It shocked me, and I had to immediately document it here in MyDiary. I sincerely hope this concept does not manifest in negative consequences.
****Text Resumption****

I repeat: for me, all this technology is exhilarating—robotics, nanotechnology, AGI/ASI, mixed reality (AR/VR), 4D printing, and so on. The point is, we need other human beings less and less.
We are building our independence, not just as a species, but as individuals. And this will change every social dynamic.

Natural selection will take its course. How? It is difficult to predict, but if history has taught us anything, it is that humans have an extraordinary ability to adapt.
The problem is that **this time, the pace of change is faster than our ability to adapt.**

The future ahead is undoubtedly fascinating, filled with incredible advancements in the era of "**super-living**"—new comforts, new possibilities, new lifestyles.
But it will also be ruthless to those who fail to adapt.
We must **enhance our cognitive and physical abilities**, because otherwise, when natural selection calls, **we will not be able to face it.**

THE DREAM OF SIMPLICITY, THE TRAP OF COMPLEXITY

It's Friday night, 2 a.m. My (unhealthy) obsession with cognitive improvement keeps me awake, stuck between stock market principles and the rules of logic (poor me, how foolish). Just to complicate my life further, I'm also trying to decipher people's communication patterns, so I can have a ready response for every possible scenario. A mental chaos where my brain, exhausted, was begging for a break.

I lay down on the couch, after hours at the desk, allowing myself the luxury of changing positions. With my iPad in hand—the only versatile tool I can manage in this state—I keep scrolling through complex charts and notes, trying not to lose the thread.

In the background, I put on a documentary with relaxing music on the TV. Something simple, just to cut through the mental chaos. At one point, my gaze shifts between the iPad, showing Wall Street's schizophrenia, and the TV, where a turtle is peacefully swimming through the ocean. Two worlds colliding. I swear, I burst out laughing.

It felt natural to compare my life to that turtle's. And I wondered: why, in my existence, do I get lost in this sea of complexities we humans have invented? None of this exists in nature. The turtle just drifts there, blissful, wandering freely in the ocean. Yet here we are, both living in the same universe, on the same planet, in the same time. The only difference is, we've built a survival system that's become far too complex compared to the natural condition of life.

Surviving today no longer requires hunting or seeking shelter. We've complicated everything, turned life into a puzzle of increasingly sophisticated mental skills. Simplicity doesn't pay anymore, and competition is so fierce that we even have to measure ourselves against non-living entities like AGI. It's no longer enough to compete with other humans, now we have to face highly optimized mechanisms with computational power that makes my brain look like an antique.

Do I think slower than them? Sure. So I have to drastically improve the quality of my thinking, even though, deep down, I know it's just a race against time. One day, not too far from now, the human brain will officially be obsolete.
But back to the point: it's moments like these that make you realize how we all shape our own perceived reality. Sure, I could choose to live peacefully, wandering free like that turtle... but it would be an illusion. A temporary escape, nothing more. A logical fallacy.

Why is it a logical fallacy to live peacefully like that turtle? Well, here's some reasoning:

1. **I'm not a turtle.** Seems obvious, but it's the foundation of everything. She's equipped to roam the ocean, I'm not. Unlike her, I don't have a shell to protect me from predators and the elements, nor the ability to go months without food with the same serenity. If I jumped into the sea, the only thing I'd encounter is hypothermia.

2. **Modern civilization doesn't work for turtles**. Today, life isn't about hunting or foraging, but surviving through the economic system, which, in its "infinite wisdom," has freed us from barbarism only to replace it with the delights of the job market. Now, food isn't found on the streets, it's bought with money. And to get that money, I have to do things far removed from hunting or gathering. No one pays me to chase prey, and if I did, I'd probably end up in jail or a mental institution.

3. **Humans are out of place in nature.** The harsh truth is, compared to other living beings, we're incredibly fragile. In an ecosystem without technology, we're practically misfits. We're not optimized for any environment: without clothes, shelter, medicine, and our dear internet (which acts as our portable library of knowledge), we don't last long. Try surviving a winter without heating or a summer without clean water, and you'll see how unwelcoming nature really is.

4. **The human brain is our only "superpower" – and it's a double-edged sword.** Sure, we have intellect and opposable thumbs, but the price to pay (classy self-reference) is that our brain never stops. The turtle doesn't worry about algorithms, five-year plans, or interest rates. We do. We've built a world where our only escape is to keep thinking about how to survive in a society that complicates every aspect of life. We're in competition with others and with ourselves, in an endless cycle of self-improvement.
   And even if I decided to "roam free in nature," I'd have to deal with viruses and bacteria killing me, animals attacking me, and finding food – which, frankly, I wouldn't even know where to get.

5. **Survival vs. comfort.** The turtle does just fine in its habitat, with little to nothing. I, on the other hand, rely on a wide range of modern comforts, from a memory foam mattress to advanced medicine. If I had to rely solely on nature, it would take one venomous sting from some strange little insect to knock me out. It's not exactly the paradise it seems.

6. **Nature isn't a vacation.** Sure, the scenery may seem idyllic: crystal-clear seas, emerald meadows, open skies, freedom everywhere. But that "freedom" is a constant fight for survival. Every animal is simply trying not to be eaten or killed by circumstances. The wild is a blood-soaked show disguised as peace. *My vision of the turtle swimming peacefully?* Just a romantic mental trap, an illusion that ignores the brutal reality of "mors tua, vita mea" that rules every second out there. What a paradoxical poetry life is.

7. **The rules of the game have changed.** Even if I chose to drop everything and live as a "free" being, I'd still be trapped in a system I can't escape. We can't go back. We're part of a complex social, economic, and technological system that has trapped us. The freedom I desire isn't the turtle's; it's an illusion that clashes with our reality. Going back, therefore, isn't just impossible: it's a lie we tell ourselves when modernity suffocates us.

So, after all this philosophizing, the conclusion is pretty simple: there's no luxury of a life without troubles for us. We built this beautiful mess ourselves, and now we have to live in it. Maybe, in the end, it's not so bad: it keeps us busy, gives us a sense of purpose, and provides us with comfort.

The moral of the story? Let the turtles enjoy their peaceful swims. We stay here, doing what we do best: complicating our lives.

THE CRISIS OF ORIGINALITY

Are we really living in the 2000s?
Well, only if we adhere to the Gregorian calendar—a system grounded in Christian chronology that paints us as a 'young' civilization. But this view is misleading. Consider the Holocene calendar, starting 10,000 years earlier when the climate stabilized, ushering in agriculture and the very notion of a civil society. By this more sensible measure (in my opinion), we'd actually be in the year 12,024.

Suddenly, we're no longer at the dawn of history but deep into our journey of civilization. Doesn't it feel more futuristic, more evolved? Well, that's because we are.

And if we dated ourselves by our age as a species, Homo sapiens, we'd be around the year 300,024. This perspective clarifies the impact of our timeline: thinking we're in humanity's infancy may obscure how far we've actually come.

Over millennia, humanity has created endlessly—philosophers, psychologists, painters, musicians, writers, and poets have left a vast legacy. Yet, despite countless ideas already committed to paper, we continue to reflect, create, and philosophize. Today, though, merely echoing familiar concepts risks accusations of "lacking originality."

To be clear, if such similarity is intentional and malicious, it's fair to critique; but when it arises naturally, it's a marvel of human thought: diverse minds, unique contexts, yet converging insights. Creating something new doesn't necessarily mean being the first; it's about being authentic, expressing one's essence through personal experience and reflection.

The risk today lies in thinking that everything has already been conceived, that human creativity is somehow exhausted. But it's not. Past creators deserve respect and recognition, of course, but to stop at their achievements would mimic the same medieval mindset that stifled cultural growth. For me, anyone who adds new nuances to poems or ideas, extending meaning beyond what the original author imagined, is an artist.

Each person has the power to perceive, conceive, and frame ideas uniquely, with motivations all their own. Context, origin, purpose—everything differentiates us. Let's not deny ourselves the right to express new art because there's always the potential for originality, always the chance to reach someone new. We are evolved beings, and creativity has no limits on similarity.

RESPONSIBILITY OF COEXISTENCE

A philosophical or literary text written by someone my age (currently 21) is often viewed with suspicion. *Why?*

Because being "too young" is seen as a sign of incapacity to truly grasp the complexity of life. As if the words written were empty, borrowed from others, or, worse still, because one hasn't accumulated enough experience, making them seem less credible.

But let's think about this for a moment: the time we live, if experienced with awareness and depth, is far richer than we might believe. It's not the amount of experiences that defines their value, but the ability to extract meaning from each individual event. It's not about how much you've lived, but how you've lived.

And yet, today, it seems like this ability has been lost. Perhaps the problem is that we are increasingly perceiving (and living) our time in a passive way, fragmenting it into mundane routines we take for granted, losing the capacity to find meaning in events.

Youth, instead of being seen as an advanced evolutionary phase with maximum biological potential (both intellectual and physical), is increasingly viewed—and excused—as a stage of stupidity and immaturity.

But a human being only becomes stupid and immature if allowed to. It's not about hormones, biochemistry, or neurotransmitters: it's about responsibility.

The biological changes of this stage do not justify stupidity or lack of responsibility. What justifies them is comfort, the ability to afford it. And I'm not talking about financial comfort, but a social context where survival is taken for granted. In our Western condition, we've moved from surviving to merely living. This, in itself, is not a bad thing, but if survival once entailed responsibility, then living requires responsibility too—both towards ourselves and others.

We must stop this indifference toward our society and our evolution, as well as the growing irresponsibility that surrounds us, and stop excusing ourselves from thinking deeply or making conscious decisions.

This growing lack of responsibility risks making future generations weaker.

Because a society that renounces complexity is a fragile society.

Freedom doesn't exist in the intrinsic sense of doing whatever we want, however we want; it exists paradoxically because of the concept of limits. Your freedom is valid as long as it doesn't infringe on mine. And for this game of coexistence to work, we need to truly understand what it means to have both rights and duties. We don't just have rights, nor do we just have duties. They complement each other: if you have rights, you also have duties, and if you have duties, you also have rights. Setting aside the Law, which varies from country to country, there is a rule that transcends national borders, a rule that deals with the existential dilemma of our species: the rule of coexistence.

We all have the right to exist, and therefore to live, but we also have the duty to uphold that right in the best possible way through coexistence—living together.
And to coexist, there are rules that cannot be dictated differently from state to state.

We must acknowledge that coexistence is only possible if we follow principles of awareness and responsibility. Too often, we compensate for the shortcomings of those who do not respect these principles.

I don't criticize young people for the sake of it, but because they are the true hope and opportunity for the betterment of our societies. We cannot stop at criticizing past generations; we must focus on the starting point, the moment when a human being begins to take shape. We must intervene in the process, not just in the product. If young people learn the principles of responsibility and awareness early on, we will live in a future with a much higher standard of coexistence.

Life is certainly meant to be enjoyed, but it's not pleasant by default.
Pleasure must be earned, comfort must be fought for, serenity must be conquered.
If each of us battles against our selfish and exploitative nature, learning to become aware and responsible, we will win the battle against human nature itself, forging a new one, in favor of our perfect and harmonious coexistence.

-So, from surviving, we moved to living, and from living to thriving.

TRANSCENDENCE

I wonder if my time is being wasted. If my energy is being wasted. Then I ask myself:
"Wasted on what, in regard to what? By what standard?"
Honestly, I wouldn't know. Capitalism would suggest I measure everything in terms of profit, evaluating the worth of my time through a "numerical-economic" lens, like return on investment (ROI).

But then I think about how money, when linked to death, feels unfulfilling to me. While transcendence does... the idea of extending oneself, of reaching the immortality of thought, experience, and knowledge. In my view, it would be a wasted life if I couldn't pass on these irreplaceable, deeply personal insights to someone.

Sure, I must also enjoy life, deriving pleasure from the senses and so on, but there is something greater calling me—something that won't allow me to ignore the need to share what I've learned, what I've experienced, and what I've thought. I feel driven towards this form of transcendence, as if bound by the idea that my existence cannot merely be an end in itself.

On an evolutionary level, I want to feel useful. I want to contribute to the improvement and optimization of future generations, leaving a mark, even if a small one.

I'm afraid of not being able to fulfill myself: as a person, as a mind. Afraid of not being able to bring my imagination to life and ending up irrelevant to society.
I'm afraid of failing, and of having to live working as an employee or within a system, suppressing my entrepreneurial spirit and freedom.
I'm afraid I wasn't born into a high enough environment or set of circumstances to have the right connections, the speed to act, the trust.
I'm afraid of getting distracted by the comfort that surrounds us, of never pushing myself hard enough.
I'm afraid of dying with deep regrets, thinking "I didn't make it."
I'm afraid of dying miserable.

It shouldn't be death coming towards me, but I who advance towards death.
It shouldn't be time that runs out, but I who exhaust it.
It shouldn't be life that leaves me empty, but I who empty it of every possibility.
The time we live, seen in this way, is not wasted.

And then, I wonder: beyond books, videos, and works, could AI be the key to this transmission? Like intelligent, empty containers, ready to replicate the best of us, creating artificial versions of ourselves?

MIRROR-REFLECTION

The story revolves around a man, Echo, cursed in a peculiar way: no reflection could ever show his true appearance.
But his predicament extended far beyond that—he was unable to determine whether he was handsome or unattractive, incapable of perceiving his own physical allure. He had no way of knowing whether others found him charming or repulsive, leaving him in constant doubt about the emotional impact he had on those around him. He was unsure of his abilities, often questioning whether he was competent or inadequate in his daily activities. He doubted his passions, struggling to distinguish what truly excited him from what he merely thought he loved. He couldn't tell whether his actions were driven by selflessness or selfishness. He was uncertain about his relationships, never knowing if the affection he received was genuine or conditional. He feared that he wasn't strong enough to face life's challenges.

Obsessed with the idea of understanding how others saw him, he constantly asked people to describe him. But with every answer, he discovered that each description varied greatly, painting a new and different portrait of him every time. Unable to grasp a clear and consistent image of himself—aside from some trivial physical details—the man was tormented by a desperate need to know how he truly appeared in the eyes of others.

His day began and ended with the same routine: approaching the villagers, begging them to describe him, hoping to piece together a mosaic of his own figure. Yet every voice told a different truth, every word painted a unique portrait, none of which reflected the image Echo so desperately longed to possess.

As Echo kept asking others to define him, his perception of his own reflection gradually blurred until it disappeared completely. Now, in the mirror, there was only emptiness—nothing. Everyone else could see him, but he could no longer see, feel, or perceive himself. He couldn't even imagine what he looked like. His mind began to waver under the weight of this absence.

What happens to a man who loses his own reflection? Who can no longer mirror himself in anything or anyone?

Dear Diary,
Every day, I ask myself: "if I cannot see my own face, do I truly exist? Is my presence in this world tangible, or am I just a fleeting shadow?"
Without a reflection, I feel as though I am losing my grip on reality. The senses I once trusted now seem like traitors.

My voice sounds like a distant echo, my footsteps reverberate as if they aren't my own, the warmth of my body feels foreign, my thoughts drift aimlessly without rest, and my breath... sometimes I wonder if it's really mine.
I'm surrounded by this unsettling feeling that I am nothing more than an illusion. I wonder, in this forced isolation, if my essence is slowly fading away.
I am overwhelmed by these thoughts, suffocated by doubts I cannot shake. I don't feel well; I think I'll go for a walk.

Echo steps outside for a walk, trying to calm the anxiety gripping him and, perhaps, to find someone who can finally reveal to him who he truly is. He heads toward the seafront, where the cool air seems to promise a bit of peace. As he walks, he notices a solitary figure sitting on a bench, gazing out toward the horizon.

He approaches cautiously. The man, an elderly blind figure, appears to be staring at the sea with such intensity that Echo wonders if, in some way, he can actually see it, or if he's simply savoring its essence through his remaining senses. The old man, his face lined with deep wrinkles and his hair tousled by the wind, seems entirely absorbed in his contemplation, as if he is enjoying the view despite his blindness.

Echo, intrigued, asked: *"What are you doing here, in front of a view you cannot see? Don't you feel like you're wasting time? I apologize if I sound intrusive. It's just… it's hard to imagine how you can 'see' without actually seeing."*

The old man responded calmly, without turning: *"Shhh… Let me dream. Even though my eyes do not see, I can still hear the rustling of the wind as it brushes through the leaves, breathe in the salty scent of the sea breeze, and feel the warmth of the sun as it dips toward the horizon. Let me imagine."*

With a tone of slightly provocative skepticism, Echo replied: "*But if you can't see all of this, how can you be sure it's real? Isn't it just an illusion that comforts you?"*

The old man smiled, sensing the challenge in Echo's words. *"And you, young one, are you sure of what you see with your eyes? Are not your certainties also shaped by past experiences and expectations?"*

"No, the few certainties I have are real because I can see them," Echo replied, slightly irritated.

"The point is not what is true in an absolute sense," the old man said, *"but what becomes true for us through our senses. For me, reality is what I feel, what I smell, what I touch."*

Echo shook his head, still doubtful. *"But without sight, aren't you missing a fundamental part of the picture? How can you trust only what you feel?"*

"Sight is just one of the senses, not the only interpreter of reality," the old man explained, his voice calm but firm. *"Those who can see often rely too much on their eyes, neglecting the other signals the world offers."*

Echo reflected on the old man's words, but his skepticism remained. *"Maybe,"* he said slowly, *"but for me, seeing is believing. I can't imagine how you perceive all of this without seeing it."*

Sensing Echo's persistent doubt, the old man decided to elaborate further: *"Consider, for example, a musician playing in an orchestra. He doesn't see every single instrument while he plays, but he listens, he feels the harmony or discord, and that guides his performance. Isn't that a way of 'seeing' through sound?"*

Echo paused for a moment. *"It's an interesting analogy, but I'm still not convinced. Music is different; it's an art born to be listened to."*

"True," the old man agreed, *"but don't you think reality could also be an art that can be 'heard,' 'felt,' and 'touched'? Each sense opens a door to a different room in the same house."*

"But sight gives us the context," Echo replied, *"allowing us to weave together these sensory experiences into a holistic understanding."*

The old man nodded. *"Yes, and I don't deny the value of sight. But I challenge you to think beyond that. Those who can see often neglect the other senses, assuming that sight provides the complete story. My experience is different, but no less valid. I 'see' the world in another way, and that doesn't make it any less real."*

"I suppose," Echo said, now a little more open but still not fully persuaded, *"there's a kind of beauty in perceiving the world as you do. It almost seems as though you have access to a landscape, a symphony of sensations that I, with my dependence on sight, tend to ignore."*

"Exactly," the old man smiled. *"And every person, whether sighted or not, has their own unique landscape. The key is to value what we can perceive, rather than regret what we cannot."*

Struck by the old man's response, Echo apologized. *"I understand now, I'm sorry for my arrogance. What is your name?"*

The old man smiled, reflecting for a moment. *"I don't know. I never wanted to name myself, or perhaps I never accepted the one others chose for me. What brings you here, young one?"*

Echo hesitated before opening up: *"I cannot see myself. I was hoping to find someone who could observe me and describe me."*

The old man nodded wisely before responding: *"My son, we don't need others' eyes, or even our own, to truly know ourselves."*

Echo, intrigued, responded: *"But without a mirror, how can I truly know who I am? How can I recognize myself?"*

The old man turned toward the sound of Echo's voice, a soft but meaningful smile on his lips. *"Young one, the greatest mirror we possess is not made of glass, nor is it found in a bathroom or a grand hall. It is in the way we live our lives. We are defined by the choices we make, by the impact we leave on others, and by the passions that drive the beating of our hearts. These are the real mirrors in which you can reflect yourself."*

"But how can I be sure of my choices if I cannot see who I am?" Echo asked, his voice heavy with growing desperation.

The old man replied with a calm and reassuring tone: *"Your actions, your passions, your interactions—these are the true images of yourself. You don't need to 'see' these things with your eyes to understand them. You feel them, you live them, you express them. That is how you know who you are."*

Echo fell silent for a moment, pondering the old man's words. Slowly, he began to understand: his obsessive quest for a reflected or descriptive image of himself had been a grave mistake.

"*So,*" Echo said, struggling but gradually grasping the clarity of the concept just revealed, *"the true mirror is not where we expect to see ourselves. It's not in reflective surfaces or external images, but in the places where our actions, thoughts, and feelings leave a mark?"*

"*Close,*" the old man replied, his voice low and reflective. *"When you stop seeking reflections in the places where you expect to find them, you begin to realize that who you are emerges in subtler, yet far more meaningful ways. It's not about looking in or out—it's about recognizing how you exist in the spaces between thoughts, between actions, and in the echo they leave behind in time."*

After their conversation, Echo returned home. Without consciously searching for it, he caught a glimpse of himself in one of the many mirrors. For the first time, the reflection had form. He looked at it, laughed softly with a sense of newfound peace, and then shattered the mirror—not because he disliked what he saw, but because he no longer needed it.

Moral of the story?

To let yourself be defined by a fictitious identity—whether external or internal—is not what truly matters. What matters is becoming aware of your own fluidity and intrinsic mutability. We are not fixed entities; we are simultaneously everything and nothing. Our essence stretches between the infinite and the void, embracing a range of possibilities that defy any static image. We are in a constant state of becoming, filled with both potential and emptiness, a mosaic of experiences that define us in the moment, but are destined to transform as we do.

CHAPTER VII
A FEW APHORISMS FROM MY DIARY

- There are people who are incapable of loving, yet are desperate to be loved.

- People like to feel superior, and any product that makes them believe it will elevate them becomes a bestseller. Selling the illusion of superiority is a brilliant business. (Just look at the luxury market, desired and even purchased by those struggling financially)

- We live in the era of shortcuts: everyone wants everything without giving anything in return.
According to my personal statistics based on lived and observed experiences:

- Only 10% of shortcuts succeed without consequences;
- 30% succeed but with delayed consequences;
- 60% fail from the start.

It's far better to build a castle brick by brick, because even if a catastrophe strikes, you'll always have solid foundations to start from again.

- Life is a game of poker: at the table, everyone’s a predator, ready to feast on your flesh. Evaluate your hand carefully, plan your strategy—decide which cards to change, how much to bet, and whether to bluff. Win or lose, stay calm and think about the next round. You can't afford a single moment of weakness, or they'll eat you alive. Oh… and try not to run out of chips, or you're out of the game.

- Everyone has their own perception and vision of reality. We’re all mad people calling each other mad. When you truly connect with someone, it’s because you’re able to share your madness. And by madness, I mean the arrogance of thinking you know what reality is, and acting accordingly.

- If you want to be the best, create new standards. Surpass beyond the end.

- I love interacting with the sincerity, innocence, and joy of children. Because for a brief moment, I too return to my "factory settings".

- A truly successful entrepreneur is also a great psychiatrist.

- The frustration of a gaze that cannot rest upon what it desires, because it knows it does not belong to it. It's as if the "object" of desire mocks the individual within their mind, reminding them of their unworthiness. In that moment, one perceives the abyssal distance between aspiration and reality.

- The obsession with fame, wealth, and sexual pleasures can blind the ego, creating an inner void and a disorientation of core values. In this state of spiritual blindness, one loses the ability to "see" what truly matters.

- Stain your gaze with a smile.

- The best predator is the one who pretends to be prey.

- In the Theater of Existence, there are men forged in the light of day and men sculpted in the shadows of night. The former are destined to have their actions exposed; the latter move silently through the darkness, hidden from the world. When men of the light catch a glimpse of the unusual glow within the men of shadow, they cannot resist aiming a spotlight at them, trying to unveil the mysteries buried in the heart of darkness. Because they do not know that the void of light is the fullness of shadow.

- Look in the mirror and reflect on your reflection.

- The eyes of the hungry frighten those who are full.

- Reality is unattainable, and all of this is extremely unrealistic.

- People riddled with mistakes, full of regrets, gripped by repressed pain. That's what I see in those who desperately cloud themselves with alcohol and the numbing haze of excessive drug use.

- Fight with vigor, resist the turmoil of the mind, and do not give in to the temptation of despair or illusory hopes. In the battle of life, no one will come to save you; if you fall, the burden of rising again is yours alone. Willpower is your only shield — yield, and you've lost.

- The hunger of those born with nothing will never be matched by those born with everything. The best entrepreneurs are always the ones driven by the greatest hunger, combined with humility and self-awareness.
No point in mentioning wisdom — no one can be presumptuous enough to claim such a title. Only the passing of time can ultimately determine that.

- To me, the most fulfilling form of help is offering a hand to someone who reflects who you once were, back when you needed help yourself.

- What messes you up about loneliness is that it makes you hear the chaos inside your own head.

- You must always have the humility to pay for your own mistakes.

- There will be moments when the entire significance of your life will condense into brief instants. The key is not to be caught off guard — facing those moments with clarity and taking with you the next stage: evolution.

- I face emptiness and emotional instability, which weaken my self-esteem. I wonder: why is my self-criticism harsher than any external judgment? Why do I self-sabotage, even when I don't want to? There's a disconnect between my desire for well-being and my inability to achieve it, suggesting inner psychological conflicts. What is this "other" inside me that overrides my will? Who are we, really?
(this is where the idea for the book first took shape)

- Memory is not just an archive of the past, but an added value that infuses meaning into our future.
To forget the emotional fabric of our stories and relationships is to strip the future of its intrinsic worth. Revisiting the past can, in fact, shed new light on future possibilities.
However, memory is also a double-edged sword: an anchor that, while grounding us in a sense of continuity, often enriches our soul more with scars than with healing. For many, it's more a curse than a blessing.
Being aware of the dynamic flow of our identity — who we were, who we are, and who we aspire to become — is essential.
And this awareness extends not only to ourselves, but also to the relationships that define our lives: who you were to me, who you are now, and who you will be in my future.
Who we were. Who we are. Who we will become.
Memory, then, becomes a prism through which we not only observe our own self, but also the complexity of our relationships — fueling a deeper reflection on the becoming of our existence (and on our present).

- We think we're going to live a long time, as if protected by something unknown. But we can die in any fucking instant — us, or the people around us.

- We live to love and be loved.
Love, in any of its forms, is so beautiful that even just witnessing it from the outside warms the heart with joy.

- Be careful not to fall into dopamine dependence: the constant pursuit of experiences from which to extract pleasure, never feeling satisfied. Always wanting more. Also, don’t fall into the sad trap of trying to please everyone — a prison that will never truly bring you fulfillment.

- The more I enrich myself externally, the more I grow poor within. All these objects, meant to impress faces. I’m drowning in the thirst for appearances.

But who am I trying to satisfy? An appearance can only attract more appearances — and I couldn't care less about appearances.
I crave complexity, the depth of a person. I want to see who they are, not who they want to appear to be.

The biggest problem, though, is that I often show who I want to appear to be — not who I really am. Am I who I say I am?
Back to square one. I get nowhere.

- It may sound cliché, overused and worn out, but in the race for wealth, people are willing to lose everyone.
Do you want to gain everything by losing everyone?
I'd rather choose everyone and lose everything; because in the end, if you have company, you'll always have something that having everything could never give you. It sounds hypocritical, I know. But it sounds even more hypocritical when someone says they're fine without everyone.

- Those who show off are often hiding insecurities behind masks: money, power, fame, beauty, intelligence...
They build up all these walls, they highlight them, but to hide what?
Their unfillable emptiness.

- I stopped believing in God when I found out Santa Claus wasn't real. The connection? Even as a child, I realized that God was just Santa Claus for adults.

- Throughout my teenage years, I tried to be overestimated.
Only now, at 21, do I realize the immense power and advantage of being underestimated: catching others off guard, surpassing expectations, and crushing the competition without warning.

- To truly embrace honesty in its purest form, one must have explored the dark corridors of dishonesty.
Only by navigating that shadowy labyrinth can one come to despise it and finally live in peaceful transparency.
Be wary of those who preach honesty without ever having danced with deceit; at the first temptation that crosses their path, they will falter and lose their way.

- If your job and tasks can be replaced by AI automation, it means you're not providing any real added value in that role. The final product or service isn't the main reason you should be better than AI. You are the best because you also bring your *personality*, your *mind*, and your *experience* to the table.
Your *Ego*. Which, by definition, is mathematically impossible to replicate (neither by colleagues nor by AI).

- I don't believe in ideals; I believe in the interests that drive human behavior.

- The most human mistake is yielding to nostalgia — the craving to reclaim what time has already taken. But the past is a closed book; trying to grasp its fading pages is an illusion. Accept the natural cycle of time: everything beautiful comes to an end, and wisdom lies in embracing the new chapter that awaits.

-In nature, I would define as perfect anything that survives without excessive problems, and even more so, dominates and excels in its function of survival. A perfect machine for the true purpose of life: to live as long as possible and carry on one’s species.

- What keeps me awake during the day is also what keeps me from sleeping at night.

- To avoid killing yourself, you must kill the part of you that wants to die.

- Actions communicate. Words, paradoxically, do not.

- I myself am my own enterprise. I don't need to invent anything else — I need to shape myself, to create the right conductor. The one capable of making what must happen, happen. It's not about building the machine, nor the mechanic. It's about creating the manual for both. I am my enterprise.

- You can't "betray" someone who doesn't trust. So what is the sadistic process in the mind of someone afflicted by the effect of being without affection?
They fall in love with the idea of stealing someone's trust — they savor it, only to gain the satisfaction of breaking it. They invite closed hearts to open, only to devour them and relish their taste. The juice of spilled blood offers a strange comfort to these predators: the nourishment from others' suffering soothes their own torment.
If you're imagining them as dark, unfriendly, and grim figures — you're wrong. They're cheerful, falsely joyful, often extending helping hands (only to feed, of course). In their intent, they are smiling.
But what creates such a monster… so ruthless? I believe only an abyssal wound, often unknown even to themselves, can do that. Triggering a slow-brewing hatred, a poison that flows, invades, and pervades their veins. Perhaps that's why, in their darkest moment, they cut them.

- I've come to doubt my own mind: is it creativity or madness?

- The reality around us is filled with lonely people who don't even realize they are. Forgiveness has become the tool used to maintain relationships that should have been severed. But to avoid boredom, to avoid being alone, to avoid starting over with someone new, to avoid sacrificing a bit of their fun at the cost of their own dignity — they forgive.

- The children of someone become no one, and the children of no one become someone.

- We struggle to be ourselves because there's always a winning model to follow in order to succeed.
And there's no point in blaming society for this... because *we* are society.
It's *us* who don't like ourselves as we are... we *want* the winning model — for ourselves and for others — and yet we complain about how artificial it all feels.

- Often, I don't know why, but I prefer getting lost rather than finding myself.
Or maybe — to truly find yourself, you first *have* to get lost…

- Temper your spirit, learn not to waver. Learn to absorb the blows.

- Born sold, will grow up buying.

- I'm the kind of manipulator who doesn't control how you dance. I simply choose the music you'll dance to — and you'll dance "freely" to exactly what I want.

- For a narcissist, suicide is nothing more than the failure to live up to their own expectations.
"I am not who I believe I am."

- It takes courage to love.

- Blessed are the ignorant. Blessed are those who don't care to think. Those who don't care about anything. Those without values beyond their own ego. I call them the miserable ones. To me, unworthy of life, because they misuse it, harming others (since extreme selfishness inevitably causes harm). But then, why "blessed"?
Because they don't suffer. They don't feel.

- One of the worst feelings a person can experience is being unable to cry when they deeply want to.
Inside, everything is silent.
Silence reigns.
An emptiness you wish you could fill. You wonder where this emotional numbness comes from. You wonder what made you so cold. And you realize that somewhere along the way, you lost a part of yourself.

- Unfortunately, we live in a very fast-paced society, where in order to survive, we must ignore what we feel and keep moving forward without giving it much weight.

- I feel anxious when I don't know what I'm feeling… when I can't tell if I should be happy or sad, worried or calm. It's in that state of uncertainty that my internal radar decides to trigger the anxiety alarm.

- Often, even when we know it in our minds, we don't want to hear it out loud. We know it's true, yet we deny it with disdain, anger, and shame.

- Loyalty and honesty win little in this society. We live in a world where tricks, shortcuts, and dishonesty are rewarded. A world where thinking with your heart is forbidden—otherwise, you'll face the consequences. We live in a society that forces you to become cold and cynical, especially if you want to live well economically.

- Be careful who you give your heart to, because you risk them walking away with it.

- Not having creates, having destroys. Those who lack, imagine what could be; those who lack, imagine in order to exist. Those who have, forget.

- To survive, we must flatten ourselves emotionally — otherwise, we'll be overwhelmed by the unfairness of others. But "others" are us. Let's not displace the problem onto someone else, when the "others" are actually ourselves. I complain about you, but you, the reader, agree with me, so it becomes a *we*, and so on. None of this makes sense.
It seems as though each of us has an emotional sphere that, once interfaced with reality, stops being acknowledged. So the question must be asked of ourselves.
Because I am you, and you are me, in the world.

- Be careful what you wish for… it will come at a price. Our happiness depends, in part, on how much we satisfy our desires.
If you want to be happy, desire little.

- Dreaming big also means suffering big.

- I tried removing the ego from my humanity to see what was left: an empty box.
The ego is our engine, our 'soul'.

- Genius is reached by learning to master one's own madness.

- In such a fragmented society, divided by intentions and interests, it's difficult to make decisions for the good of all.

-There are those who feel like gods, those who feel powerful, and those who feel irresistible. I feel like a slave whose chains have just been removed: free. I feel free.

-To write captivating stories, you need to write dramatic ones. Sometimes I wonder if our destinies work the same way.

-My perception of reality has become so strange that only two options remain: either I've understood everything, or I've understood nothing and simply gone mad — although, as I like to say: "Genius is nothing more than educated madness."

- genius is someone who can make children laugh while making adults reflect.

-Scattered, I know… but so chaotic that it becomes stimulating to seek clarity.

The end

A hug

CLOSING CREDITS

Dear reader,

If you've made it this far, I thank you sincerely and hope this was a thought-provoking read — something worth your time. The sources of my knowledge are a mix of psychology and psychiatry manuals, essays by various authors, and scientific studies. Listing them all in detail would be impossible. But I'm not interested in creating a professional educational book that claims absolute truth.

The true goals of this book are four:

1. To transmit the knowledge that helped me understand and heal;

2. To leave something for my future son or daughter, in case they ever feel lost — a glimpse into the mind of their 22-year-old parent. Right or wrong, this vision helped me grow and overcome very dark times;

3. To reach someone who needed to read these words, whether they agree with them or not;

4. To make my thoughts immortal.

This book was entirely written, composed, and formatted by me… a real challenge for my very first book.
I don't consider myself a professional writer — I'm not in the industry — but writing is my greatest passion. Thanks to Amazon's independent self-publishing, I've been able to fulfill this dream.

The only "assistant" I had during the making of this book was ChatGPT (OpenAI), my faithful artificially intelligent collaborator. I even wrote an article on my blog explaining how writers should use these tools without shame and without losing originality.

It helped me translate from my native Italian to English, brainstorm ideas, reflect on the structure of certain expressions, and ease the organizational process. That's what I consider a proper use of AI in writing — preserving the writer's originality, without intellectual appropriation.

I never delegate the originality of my visions, theories, or thoughts to these systems (where's the fun in that?). Simply put, I don't think they're on par. I'd rather trust my own black box than theirs. So rest assured — every idea in this book comes from me.

Besides, I enjoy chatting with these systems. I don't make the mistake of anthropomorphizing them — I simply have fun communicating, code to code.

But back to our farewells…
My greatest desire is to bring my imagination to life. I'm currently writing a series of novels I hope to complete — and my dream is to one day see them brought to the big screen. Each story is self-contained but interconnected, based on the idea that our reality is a simulation. Each tale explores a different world with its own rules and parameters, until they all converge in one grand finale: the revelation of the origin of reality itself.
Let's see if fate allows me to make it happen…

That said — Dear reader, I hope we meet again. I wish you all the best.

And remember: we all have an expiration date. Don't waste your time.